

**METAPHYSICAL  
VISION**

# **METAPHYSICAL VISION**

**D. R. KHASHABA**

**2020**

## PREFACE

**“Whence are we, and why are we?”** (Shelley, *Adonais*). We do not know and will never know. But we cannot refrain from asking ourselves and puzzling. Not to do is to be less than human. Yet we cannot have an answer. Without asking the question we are less than human. Without an answer to the question our life remains empty and vain.

**From the earliest times of human existence humans found one escape from the dilemma. They created for themselves aims and values. They created gods and tales of beginings**

**and tales of a hereafter. They created dream worlds in which life is endowed with meaning albeit only a meaning of their own invention.**

**We remain and will ever remain faced with the inescapable yet unanswerable question. Other than putting an end to our life, we have only two ways to choose between: either to live a life ‘signifying nothing’ or to infuse into our life a significance of our own making.**

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**For millennia philosophers have been enriching our cultural heritage with their visions but, with a very few exceptions, have contaminated their good work with one of or with both of two fatal corruptions: (1) they thought they were providing factual knowledge of the world; (2) they thought they could arrive at answers to ultimate questions by pure reason.**

**These two errors, either one singly or both jointly, poisoned the fruit of their creative imagination.**

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**From the first book which I published in 1998 when I was already past seventy I have been proffering a vision that I will designate in no other way than as a personal vision. The essays collected here – written between January and May 2020 – are variations on the one theme of that vision. The papers are reproduced as originally posted to my blog with such minimal editing as my near-blindness permits.**

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*Tetelestai.*

**D. R. Khashaba**

**May 25, 2020**



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## CORE OF THE *REPUBLIC*

The *Republic* of Plato is commonly seen as a political treatise so that students and commentators concentrate on the ideal city model to the extent that what is of greater weight is more or less neglected.

To my mind the ideal city in the *Republic* was what Socrates explicitly designates it to be, an imaginative model fashioned for the specific purpose of representing Justice on a large scale (Book II, 368c ff.). What the model reveals of Plato's political thinking is a debatable question and is mainly of historical interest only.

As I see it, the *Republic* as a whole was carefully planned by Plato beforehand to vindicate the philo-

sophical life as the truly good life for human beings; the heart and core of the vindication being the profound discussion of the metaphysical ground and rationale of the philosophical life in the central part of the *Republic* (from 472a in Book V to the end of Book VII) which I regard as the core of the *Republic* and the epitome of Platonism. (To professional philosophers and scholars it is a mere digression.)

Book I begins in the manner of the elenctic discourses as a search for the meaning of Justice. Socrates repeatedly asserts that the question is truly about what life is best for a human being. He argues first against Thrasymachus's contention that justice is what benefits the stronger. But at 347e he makes a crucial shift in the direction of the argument:

**“I can by no means agree with Thrasymachus that justice is the advantage of the stronger. But this we will consider some other time. It seems to me that a far**

**greater matter is what Thrasymachus now asserts: that the life of the unjust is superior to that of the just.”**

**This pivotal shift was, in my opinion, essential in Plato’s plan for the whole of the *Republic* and was designed to lead to the most valuable excursion into the metaphysical ground and justification of a philosophical life irradiated with spiritual insights and values as the only good life for a rational being.**

**D. R. Khashaba  
January 8, 2020**

## **THOUGHT**

**All thought is an image, either (1) of phenomena reaching us through sensuous experience, and this is the majority of what we are concerned with in our daily life as well as in our scientific investigations; or (2) of our inner realities, and these constitute the subject-matter of (a) philosophical reflection (in the widest sense), or (b) imaginative and creative works in philosophy, poetry, drama, fiction, and all forms of art.**

**In all cases thought is an image, a token, whether of actualities or of realities and is not itself either actuality**

**or reality. (By ‘reality’ I mean metaphysical reality as opposed to physical actuality.) Thus all thought is representation, a creation of the mind itself; and all thought about thought (logic, epistemology, literary and art criticism) is second-order representation, a fiction twice removed. Hence we can have different logics, different epistemologies, different interpretations and different evaluations of literary works and works of art. All these logics, epistemologies, criticisms, differ but need not conflict. The heated controversies of philosophers are blind-men’s quarrels about whether the elephant is a long soft tube or a hard sharp-tipped cone. We are not given to probe to the bottom the depth of either physical things in the outer world or of ideas, feelings, subjective states within us.**

**The common sin of both scientists and philosophers is the hubris of**

**refusing to acknowledge our ignorance. But we are not worse off than God. As God in creating the universe can only create fleeting phantoms (for anything to exist is to be finite and determinate and hence transient), we likewise, at best, can only create myths and fictions — or failing that, be ourselves nothing but passing shadows “signifying nothing”.**

**“We feel, conceive or reason,  
laugh or weep;  
“Embrace fond woe, or cast Our  
cares away:**

**“It is the same!—For, be it joy or sorrow,  
“The path of its departure still is free:  
“Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow;  
“Nought may endure but Mutability.”**

**Shelley,  
“Mutability”.**

**D. R. Khashaba**  
**February 9, 2020**

# **MODERN PHILOSOPHY - I**

## **FOREWORD**

**Two motives egged me to get into this venture. (1) Ever since I reached my ninety-second birthday some four months ago I have been in two minds. On the one hand I thought it was time to pause, rest, write nothing more, spend my remaining days reading poetry and listening to music. On the other hand, since I have no means of knowing how short or how long my remaining days are to be, it would be a pity if I am given something like a year or so and yet do nothing when I could have done something. (2) In all**

**my writings I have complained of the poverty of modern philosophy. I thought I might give my negative assessment of modern philosophy in some detail and some order.**

**My present intention is to do this in a number of short papers to be posted to my blog serially: if I die soon I will have lost nothing and visitors to my blog will have lost nothing. If I live to bring the series to an end, I can then upload it as a book with my other books.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**January 13, 2020**

## **MODERN PHILOSOPHY – II**

### **PREFACE**

**Modern philosophy is a misnomer. It has two distinct sources that from the start in the seventeenth century drove the study of philosophy way away from its true course.**

**René Descartes (1596—1650) was a mathematician who advanced a method of inquiry that was in truth nothing new but the method practised by Greek geometers from Pythagoras onwards. Descartes's celebrated *Discourse on Method* boils down to this: any inquiry, to proceed properly, must start from clear and distinct ideas, accepting what follows**

**from those ideas as true. This was the ground of the mad Rationalism that swept Europe and led to dogmatic metaphysical systems that philosophers continued to spawn even when it became clear that equally ‘rationalist’ systems contradicted one another and even after Kant had shown the error and vacuity of dogmatic metaphysics. The fallacy of Rationalism also touched science but this lies outside my present object.**

**In England Francis Bacon (1561–1626), a lawyer and an Aristotelian, advocated the empirical, inductive method of research. This was the ground of British Empiricism which confronted Continental Rationalism.**

**As Rationalism is good for mathematics and pure logic and for little else so Empiricism is good for the scientific study of natural objects and happenings and for nothing else. It is unfortunate that both Descartes and Bacon introduced their methods in the name of philosophy. As Rational-**

ism led to dogmatic metaphysics so Empiricism subjected philosophic questions and philosophic themes to the objectification and experimentation proper to science and ended up in Analytic Philosophy which has nothing to do with the primordial wonder and puzzlement about the mysteries of Being and Life and Understanding and the yearning to unite with the All — these puzzlements and yearnings that are the all in all of philosophical thinking.

A further misfortune was the professionalization of philosophy. Professionalism means adherence to authority and submission to established rules and procedures. Philosophy can only live as free exploration of the philosopher's own mind. It was Aristotle who first misdirected philosophy to this wilderness so that thereafter and especially throughout the past four centuries we only find philosophic insight and philosophic vision in poetry and other forms of creative literature and in the work of

**the handful of thinkers who escaped professionalism.**

**In this series of papers that I hope to offer I intend to present a number of acknowledged philosophers and maybe two or three poets. I have to state explicitly that this is not a work of scholarly research. I will be giving only my naïve personal reading. Neither in the case of the philosophers nor in the case of the poets do I claim any specialized or special study.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**January 14, 2020**

## **MODERN PHILOSOPHY – III**

### **NOTE:**

**At the outset I have to state that in this series of papers – notes rather – on a number of modern thinkers it is not my intention to offer a study of these thinkers. My aim is strictly limited. I am advocating a particular understanding of the nature of philosophical thinking (which will be made plain towards the end of the series). I intend to show that academic philosophy is, by its very nature and its favoured outlook(s) denied access to philosophy as seen under that particular understanding and the lamentable result is that academic philosophy has been put out of touch with the problems of human life and values.**

## **DESCARTES**

**In my view, the importance of Descartes is mainly historical. He came at a time when the Renaissance had prepared the European mind to break free of the constraints of petrified Scholasticism and Aristotelianism. Descartes helped accelerate that break.**

**Descartes's principal philosophical works are three: *Discourse on Method*, 1637, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 1641, and *Principles of Philosophy*, 1644.**

**Descartes was a mathematician and a scientist and did much work in mathematics and in science before publishing the *Discourse on Method* in 1637 when he was 41. The full title of the book was *Discours de la méthode pour bien conduire sa raison et chercher la vérité dans les sciences* and contained three additional scientific works. This indicates the scope and the limits of Descartes' interest. A survey of the first two Parts of the *Discourse on Method* is all I need for my present purpose.**

**Early on in the book he states that he has devekoped a method for conducting his own thinking and he proposes to tell us how he arrived at that method. In his childhood, he tells us, he was exposed to book-learning which was supposed to give clear and certain knowledge about everything. But he was soon beset with doubts and found errors in what he had been taught. After surveying all the learning he had been given, he says:**

**“C'est pourquoi, sitôt que l'âge me permit de sortir de la sujexion de mes précepteurs, je quittai entièrement l'étude des lettres; et me résolvant de ne chercher plus d'autre science que celle qui se pourrait trouver en moi-même, ou bien dans le grand livre du monde ...”**

**Clearly this is a condensed expression of the revolt that was rife at the time against Scholasticism. That Descartes voiced it so clearly and so concisely was his special contribution to the nascent revolution that gave us our present-day science and technol-**

ogy. I suggest that it was this rather than his Method that entitled him to be called the father of modern philosophy.

In Part II Descartes continues his account of how he arrived at his method. He was serving in the German army; on his way back from the Emperor's coronation he was held by wintry weather and spent the day all alone in a heated room, given to reflection. He reflected that works composed of several parts contributed by different workers are usually less perfect than those made by one person. That led on to the thought that as children we grow up under diverse influences and are instructed by many teachers. Hence our judgments are clouded and not well grounded. It would have been otherwise if from the start we had had the full use of our reason and had been guided by it alone. We cannot remedy that by undoing what has been done to build anew on new foundations. Yet something can still be done: to rid ourselves of opinions previously held

**so as to replace them with better ones. This was the basis of the idea or plan of methodical doubt.**

**Descartes proposes to replace the numerous rules of Logic with the following four rules (here much abridged) which give the gist of the Method:**

- (1) Never to accept anything as true without having evident knowledge of its truth.**
- (2) To divide each difficulty into as many parts as possible.**
- (3) To direct one's thoughts in an orderly manner, starting with the simplest and most easily known objects.**
- (4) To make all numerations as complete, and all reviews as comprehensive as possible.**

**Descartes says that geometers had led him to think that •all things that can be known can be arrived at by deduction. That is exactly the gist of the Rationalism he propagated. All through his ‘discourse on method’ Descartes has the model of geometrical reasoning in mind and confusedly takes the Method as applicable in**

**all spheres of inquiry, physical, moral, and metaphysical.**

**This erroneous assumption, unguardedly absorbed by European thinkers, fostered in philosophy irrational metaphysical dogmatism and in science bred the equally irrational dogmatism of causal necessity so that even Kant, despite his Humean awakening, could not bring himself to question that error that had instituted itself as a scientific article of faith, with the result that poor Kant, in *Critique of Practical Reason*, struggled in vain to reconcile moral freedom with the fiction of causal necessity.**

**What I have said in the preceding paragraph will be puzzling to many. I have been explaining and supporting my unorthodox views in my writings over more than two decades and I cannot recapitulate all that here.**

**As I have already explained, in this paper I am not offering a study of Descartes, else I would have had much to say on the frailty of the ‘Cognito’, on the damaging error of the ‘two substances’ doctrine that bred**

**the false and misleading opposition of Dualism and Monism, on mechanistic explanation which has blinded us to essences and inner realities, and on much else. My purpose in this series is to bare the error of the two approaches – Rationalism and Empiricism – that divide modern philosophy into two opposed camps. I will therefore at present go no further into the *Discourse on Method* and will move on to other major modern philosophers. In the following two papers I will try to show how Descartes's Method misled two very different thinkers, Leibniz and Spinoza.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**January 18, 2020**

## **MODERN PHILOSOPHY – IV**

### **LEIBNIZ**

**The approach and thought of Descartes spread like wild fire throughout the Continent. In the seventeenth century two thinkers both of very bright intellect but otherwise of opposed characters – Leibniz and Spinoza – developed on common Cartesian ground two stringently logical systems that were else completely opposed.**

**Leibniz's philosophy is grounded on two foundation stones: (1) Descartes' doctrine of innate ideas and**

**(2) his own peculiar development of Aristotle's notion of substance.**

**The gist of the doctrine of innate ideas is that ideas – the substance of knowledge – do not come to the mind from the outside world but originate in the mind. This is the insight that the Empiricists persist in ignoring. In essence the insight goes back to the Socratic distinction between intelligible ideas from perceptibles or things in the natural world. The great merit of Plato is that he saw clearly that we have no explanation of how we come to know anything. That we know, that we find things intelligible, is an ultimate mystery. In acknowledgment of this insight Plato introduced the myth of Reminiscence. Neither Descartes nor Leibniz explained how or in what manner ideas were innate in the mind. In my philosophy I say that our essence (inner reality) being creative intelligence, our mind creates**

**ideas that confer meaning and intelligibility on the blind sensuous input coming from the outside world and creates meaningful Imaginative worlds woven out of its own pure ideas.**

**Out of Aristotle's logical category of substance Leibniz develops his own peculiar notion of self-contained, self-enclosed, self-sufficient substances, each substance (monad) being a world apart, independent of everything outside of itself, each of which nevertheless somehow reflects the others thanks to the pre-established harmony installed into them by God. That is the whole content of Leibniz' metaphysical system, the *Monadology* — a brilliant, beautiful, fascinating model of an imaginative world that no one has ever taken seriously.**

**SPINOZA**

**Building on the same Cartesian grounds as Leibniz, Spinoza develops a totally different metaphysics. Spinoza finds that there can only be one substance. This is the same insight that led Parmenides to see the One as the whole of Reality and the whole of Being. But whereas Parmenides could characterize the One with nothing but negations, denying it all quality, all specificity, all particularity, Spinoza's one Substance had infinite attributes and had two complementary aspects or dimensions, *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*; and whereas Parmenides's One was lifeless and motionless, Spinoza's Substance was at least thinking.**

**Spinoza proudly introduces his system, in his *magnum opus*, the *Ethics*, as “geometrically demonstrated”. This was of course in conformity with the Rationalist credo. And the abstruse ‘demonstrations’ of the *Ethics***

**are indeed of the nature of geometrical demonstration in that they do nothing but unfold the implications inherent in the initial *ad hoc* definitions and axioms.**

**Spinoza's implicit adherence to Cartesian Rationalism not only misleads him into advancing meticulously wrought out 'demonstrations' that are in truth vacant but, more seriously, denies him the possibility of a true understanding of freedom. Leibniz played grammatical and logical tricks to offer a fake vindication of free will that he fully knew his system totally excluded. Spinoza, more honest, did not conceal that there was no place for true freedom in his system. Spinoza insightfully held that when we humans behave under the direction of inadequate ideas we are in the bondage of passion but when we behave in the light of adequate ideas we act autonomously and to that extent are**

**free though our action can be accounted for in terms of antecedents.** This is true of all choice and all deliberation. But we have true freedom in spontaneous, creative activity, and only in spontaneous, creative activity — moral, artistic, or philosophical. In Spinoza's system there was no place for that: in Spinoza's system not even God (the universal Substance) is free but rolls determinedly in obedience to the invincible logic of antecedents.

## **CONCLUSION**

**That is all we get out of erecting imposing metaphysical systems — intrinsically coherent and consistent — using solely abstract ideas of the mind.** That bares the inanity of hubristic Rationalism breeding dogmatic metaphysics that justly earned Hume's condemnation (“... *commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing*

**but sophistry and illusion") and the ridicule of Positivists.**

**Shall we obey Hume then and commit all metaphysics to the flames? No; as Plato knew, philosophical thinking is a permanent and perpetual wrestling with the ultimate mysteries of Being and Life and Value and Knowledge. In mystic experience we aspire to union with the All, to merging in the Whole. In philosophical wrestling and in mystic experience we have glimpses of unfathomable, ineffable realities. Philosophers and poets voice these glimpses intimating the unfathomable and ineffable realities in myths and parables. Without metaphysical aspirations, yearnings, strivings, we are lower than the brutes. When we take philosophical and poetical myths and parables for actual accounts of the natural world we are fools deserving the condemnation of Hume and the ridicule of Car-**

**nap, Ryle, Ayer, and I know not whom of today's Analytic philosophers.**

I spoke of the harm done by Rationalism in philosophy. Scientists too have unguardedly embraced the Rationalist creed. But as scientists feed their Rationalism with the nonsense food of observed natural actualities they are not so easily misled into fancies; yet, in one respect, I believe, the Rationalist faith has led scientists astray, that is, in their uncritical, dogmatic adoption of the fiction of causal necessity. I maintain that, since (quite apart from my contention that all becoming is creative) it is indubitable that nature is always changing, there can be no absolute repetitiveness in nature. (This agrees with Leibniz' principle of the identity of indiscernibles.) Consequently any 'laws' based on observed phenomena can only be approximations, never of

**absolute accuracy or absolute certainty. Fortunately nature has regular habits and only rarely gives us surprises. But extending our trust in the ‘predictability’ of nature beyond all limits is, to say the least, highly risky. And to deny our immediate awareness of our freedom and creativity on the higher levels of moral, artistic, and intellectual activity on the ground that it is incompatible with causal necessity is to my mind foolish.**

**A FINAL NECESSARY EXPLANATION** Here and throughout all my writings I have censured Rationalism. This should be clearly distinguished from rationality. To be rational is to live, and believe we must always live, in the light of reason and understanding. To be a Rationalist is to expect pure logic working with nothing but

**abstract ideas can give us valid  
knowledge about the actual state of  
things in the world.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**January 20, 2020**

## MODERN PHILOSOPHY – V

### EMPIRICISM

The tale of Empiricism is not as straightforward as that of Rationalism. **Francis Bacon (1561–1626)** promoted the scientific method which is basically empiricist. That was in harmony with the spirit of the age and in itself raised no problem. But John Locke (1632–1704) in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* opposed the doctrine of innate ideas advocated by Descartes. Leibniz rebutted Locke's arguments in his *New Essays on Human Understanding*. This was the beginning of the long-lasting contro-

**versy between Rationalists and Empiricists.**

**The extended controversy however covers two distinct problems. (1) The metaphysical problem of the provenance of ideas, to which I will devote a special paper. (2) The epistemological problem of the appropriateness of this or that method.**

**Regarding this second problem, rightly understood, there need be no controversy and no opposition. Rationalism is a method good for closed abstract systems such as mathematics and logical symbolism and for nothing else. This is the domain of analytic *a priori* judgments. Empiricism is the method proper to the investigation of objective natural phenomena and for nothing else. This is the domain of synthetic *a posteriori* judgments (Kant's novel synthetic *a priori***

**judgments pertain to the metaphysical domain.) When either method trespasses into regions beyond its confines we have errors and quandaries and absurdities.**

**John Locke had wide interests. His thinking was influential in such diverse fields as education, religious toleration, theology, and British democracy is indebted to his theories of limited, liberal government. He has been called the Father of British Empiricism, but if the sane scientific empiricism is his legitimate offspring other bastard impostors falsely claimed the honour. Locke's two immediate successors, Berkeley and Hume, were original thinkers, each in his different way. But then Empiricism went astray and fostered absurdities. In the following papers, after two short notes on Berkeley and Hume, I will treat some samples of the absurdities.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**January 22, 2020**

## **MODERN PHILOSOPHY – VI**

### **BERKELEY**

**It is only by historical accident that George Berkeley (1685—1753) has a place among British Empiricists. John Locke's influence in British thinking was so great that any philosopher writing in English had to take Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* as his starting point. Locke had thought that knowledge of the outside world comes to us as ideas received from the natural world through our senses. (Locke's use of the term 'idea' was unfortunate. Hume improved on Locke's usage by saying that we receive impressions which are worked in the mind into ideas.) Berkeley argued that if all we**

get from the outside world are ideas then we have no right to assume the existence of objects beside or over and above the ideas. We cannot assume the existence of substances. Substances are only combinations or collections of ideas. Their *esse est percipi*. Thus sensations cannot exist independently, all by themselves. What happens then to things when we are not seeing, not hearing, not touching anything? They simply cannot be. This could have been used as a *reductio ad absurdum* of Locke's thesis, but instead Berkeley said that the ideas which constitute things have only one place where they can be, that is, the mind of God. Thus in Berkeley we have the anomalous wedding of Idealism with Empiricism. Indeed Idealism was deeply rooted in Berkeley's nature: in his *siris* we can detect clear traces of Platonic influence.

## HUME PREFATORY NOYE

**David Hume (1711—1776) was a great thinker whose thought formed a self-consistent whole that was shredded by those who claim to be his followers; they chose what suited them and closed their eyes to what they found troublesome. This was the first corruption of Empiricism which turned Bacon’s approach and method of scientific inquiry of natural things into a wrong-headed epistemology and a rejection of metaphysics that later on gave place to a prostitution of metaphysics by marauders. (For a sample see *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics*, ed. Stephen Laurence and Cynthia Macdonald, Blackwell, 1998.) These are bold claims that I will not be justifying in this paper but will need subsequent papers on individual Empiricists to justify my grievance. The final goal of the series will, I hope, be reached in two concluding essays on the “Provenance of Ideas” and the “Nature of Philosophical Thinking”.**

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**Hume was essentially a questioner, a natural sceptic. His alert mind subjected everything to scrutiny. His scepticism was not an assumed tentative stance like Descartes's but a life-long natural drive.**

**Hume's intent and purpose in writing his *Treatise* is clearly indicated in the full title: "A Treatise of Human Nature: being an attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects". If we keep this in mind we will have no difficulty in assessing his philosophy and recognizing its strength and its limitations. He sees the *Treatise* as a propaedeutic to philosophical inquiry in the widest sense, showing what is legitimate and proper to human understanding and what is not.**

**He was especially concerned to employ his sceptical approach to fight unfounded dogmatic beliefs received on authority or passively inherited rather than arrived at through criti-**

**cal reasoning, not alone in religion and morality but also in science.**

**Thus in the very heart of the scientific revolution that had begun a century earlier and was then in full swing, he saw that the experimental method – which he enthusiastically advocated – rested on two unjustified and unjustifiable beliefs: the notion of causality and trust in the method of induction. That was not all: even the epoch-making work of Newton incorporated the fictions of absolute space and absolute time.**

**From the earliest times human beings have been making practical use of the notion of causation and have relied on induction to arrive at generalizations about regularities in natural processes. We have no alternative but to pragmatically make use of these time-tested expedients but we would be wrong to let them mislead us in our theoretical thinking.**

**I will not here discuss Hume's arguments baring the irrationality of the notion of causation or of the**

**method of induction or his critique of the notions of space and time since all of this lies outside the scope of this series.**

**Hume speaks of metaphysical reasoning to indicate reasoning about the first principles relevant to any sphere of knowledge. For metaphysics as I understand metaphysics he obviously has bi place in his scheme of philosophy. There is no need to expand pm this at this point but in the last essay in this series I will present my understanding of metaphysics which will also be my defence of metaphysics.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**January 24, 2020**

## **PROVENANCE OF IDEAS**

**The surest mark of a philosopher is puzzlement. A born philosopher is deeply and constantly irked by questions. A born non-philosopher (there are such) also asks questions, practical questions that have or can have answers. But a born philosopher's questions have no utility and have no answers. She or he is confronted with Being, with Life, with Beauty, with Understanding and just cannot understand how these can be or what their essence might be. I simply cannot imagine how highly adept persons who can do higher mathematics and manipulate AI and juggle with IT**

**take all these mysteries in their stride  
as they take their daily breakfast. To  
a philosopher, Being, Life, Love.  
Knowledge, are mysteries and remain  
mysteries. The moment she or he  
thinks they have understood any of  
these, that moment announces the  
demise of the philosopher in them.**

**Where do ideas come from? This  
is simply a variation on the mystery  
of Knowledge or Understanding. The  
ultimacy of the mystery was noted at  
the very beginning of the history of  
Western philosophy. Heraclitus spoke  
of a universal Logos common to all  
people. That was not a faculty or a  
property of human beings; it was in  
the very nature of things, a First  
Principle like the Tao. It was the  
Logos that the writer of the Fourth  
Gospel borrowed and made one ibe  
with God. Parmenides asserted the  
identity of *noein* and *einai*. (The ‘in-  
nate ideas’ of Descartes is something**

**totally different.) Socrates spoke of Intelligible Ideas that give things what meaning they have for us and lend things what reality they have.**

**Plato knew that these Intelligible Ideas do not come from things; they are not found in things, not abstracted from things as Aristotle thought, but are conferred by the mind on things.**

**How? Plato, as a genuine philosopher, knew that he had no answer to this How?. He acknowledged the ultimacy of the mystery and that is the true significance of the myth of Rebirth and Reminiscence. The myth proclaims that there is no explanation to the mystery of our knowing anything, our understanding anything.**

**That is the true purport of the dictum of Einstein (who was at heart more of a philosopher than a scientist): “The eternal mystery of the world is its comprehensibility.”**

To my mind, the only way we can find the mystery of Knowledge or Understanding intelligible is to acknowledge that Being is essentially nothing but Intelligence, Creative Intelligence. If Being is Intelligence, if *einai* signifies *noein* as Parmenides declared, then it is in the nature of things that we know, that we understand. It is when our individual being, our personal being, is fragmented that we are plunged in shadows, in obscurity. That is the bondage of passion that Spinoza attributed to inadequate ideas. When our ideas are adequate we are active, are free, and see things *sub specie aeternitatis*. What I have just been saying does not mean that we find the mystery explainable or that we are demystifying the mystery but that we are finding repose from our puzzlement in contented acceptance of the ultimany of the mystery.

**What I have been saying of the mystery of Knowledge goes for the mystery of Life, the mystery of Love, the mystery of ultimate Reality. It is when we find the All, the Whole, is essentially Life and Intelligence and Love that we find repose in our contented acknowledgment of these mysteries. Understanding is the intrinsic luminosity of ultimate Intelligence, Life is the throb of the eternal creativity of ultimate Reality, Love is the outflow of ultimate intelligent Creativity which I name Creative Eternity. For Creativity too is an ultimate mystery which alone renders all becoming ineligible and apart from which all becoming is irrational, inexplicable miracle. Thus Plato symbolizes ultimate Reality by the Form of the Good that is the fount of being and of intelligence; and allegorizes ultimate creativity in the notion of *tokos en kalōi*.**

**If few philosophers have attained to these insights, it is to the glory of poets that they have been the prime proclaimers of the mystic vision intimated by these insights. Wordsworth in his Tintern Abbey poem writes:**

**“with an eye made quiet by the power  
“Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
“We see into the life of things.”**

**Wordsworth speaks of seeing “into the life of things.” Why not? It is through human infirmity and not wisdom that we see things lifeless. When Thales said that all things are full of gods he was not a fool; he saw that even so-called inanimate things, to move, to react, must be internally empowered, nay, must ultimately in their inmost essence be nothing but *dunamis* as Plato said in the *Sophist*. When it comes to animals, can a frolicking kitten, a cavorting gazelle, be**

**without exuberant feeling of the life within? I somewhere wrote: must not a butterfly be as beautiful within as without? Shelley addresses the Skylark:**

**“Teach me half the gladness  
“That thy brain must know”.**

**This is not folly but insight.**

**Yet, dear Reader, if you think that in what I have written here I have given way to an old man’s decrepitude, I assure you I have not reneged on my confession of philosophical ignorance. I maintain that we know nothing and can know nothing about the actual world. Our daily-life practical knowledge is what Santayana designated Animal Faith. Our proud scientific knowledge is comprises our interpretations of phenomena that apart from our interpretations have no meaning for us. (Kant said this but Kant has no more been**

**understood than Plato has been.) In philosophizing we do not seek factual knowledge about the world but crave a vision that relieves our yearning to understand, that appeases our aspiration to live in an intelligible world, though that world must be and cannot but be an imaginative vision of our own creation. Dear Reader, if this does not appeal to you, if you insist that I am an old man raving, I will say, No, rather think of me as having been possessed by the spirit of a Plotinus!**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**January 28, 2020**

## **THE ROOT OF UNHAPPINESS**

**Dear Reader, the following is a sigh  
of sorrow. Read it as such; else ignore  
it.**

...

**Apart fro, physical ailment and natu-  
ral catastrophe the principal cause of  
unhappiness in human life is when  
pne values illusions above love.**

**The one true criterion of love is  
ranking the good of the other and the  
happiness of the other above one's  
own good and happiness.**

**All things else, not only things  
that are priced in gold, but ambitions,  
dreams, healthy enjoyments, are in  
themselves vanity of vanities.**

**They are only provisionally good  
when they go hand in hand with love.**

**When a conflict involves a moral  
principle, when giving way to the oth-  
er means acceding to moral evil, then  
we have a tragic situation.**

**The other in such a case is not a  
person, not a moral agent, but part of  
the imperfection of natural existents.**

**In such a case the loving one  
must suffer the tragedy.**

**I am convinced of ths and have  
often seen all of this verified.**

**I have often seen persons I loved  
cause unhappinrss to each other and  
to themselves and to those around  
them because they valued things**

**which, if they did not exclude love,  
could be called good.**

**I am not arguing; I am sermonizing. If you have grown up in a loving atmosphere or if you have passed through an experience that inspired you with the power of love, you will sense the truth of my words.**

**Else my words will be strictly nonsensical to you.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**January 29, 2020**

## **LOGIC AND REALITY**

**No one has to study Logic to think logically, to syllogize properly. It is only (a) when we, too indolent, allow obscurity and confusion to lead us astray, or (b) when we, too clever, permit reason to tread beyond the proper boundaries of reason, only then do we need Logic to show us where and how we erred.**

**Analytic ‘philosophers’ commit both sins. Too arrogantly and too lazily they require language, with or without symbolism, to do their thinking for them. With or without symbolism they turn language into a *ca-***

*davre* composed of lifeless shells and, juggling with the empty shells, proudly get formally ‘correct’ results that are in a sky of their own, as completely separated from all actuality and all reality as Leibniz monads *sans* pre-established harmony. One who was accidentally of their company but not in nature of their kin, Wittgenstein, saw this and declared openly that Logic says nothing; but Analytic ‘philosophers’, despite their adulation of Wittgenstein, conveniently choose to ignore this. Analytists do with Wittgenstein what German Idealists did with Kant: they idolized him but dumped his central message.

A closed system of parched symbols is good for pure mathematics, pure logic, and maybe (I am venturing beyond my range) maybe for theoretical physics or theoretical chemistry. But even then it is only good for a game of generating purely formal

**equations within and only within the closed system. The moment it is contaminated with the germ of actuality – necessarily always fugitive, never fixed, never constant – it is infected with inaccuracy and uncertainty — or metaphysically speaking, infected with the essential imperfection of all finite, determinate existence. That is why all science, strictly speaking, must always be approximate and uncertain. What is the progress of science but the perpetual correction of inescapable scientific error? The best scientists, in their sanguine moments, recognize this momentarily, but when they are engrossed in their practical work they are likely to lose sight of it. I have discussed this in some detail in many of my writings, most succinctly and somewhat playfully in a short paper: “Why  $2+1=3$  Is Nonsense”.**

**Why is it that we do not need to study Logic? I will give you my an-**

**s**wer prophetically: It is that our inner reality, our very essence, is creative intelligence. There is no other way to explain the miracle of our being able to think and to understand. Watch a toddler: it will surprise you with behaviour rich with inherent logic. A two-year-old baby, as soon as she/he has caught the elements of speech will come up with original syntactically correct structures in whatever language chance may have given her/him. If I were taken back sixty years in age I would devote myself to a study of baby logic.

**W**hy is it then that we individually and the mass of people everywhere all over our miserable planet are drowned in folly, error, and ignorance? The answer to this question demands a thick tome for which my remaining days would not suffice, but shortly put, it is that we are corrupted, fragmented, deluded by inherited

**falsehoods and superstitions.**  
**Throughout human history there**  
**have been few individuals that were**  
**whole and simple and pure, a Gau-**  
**tama Buddha, a Socrates, or a meek**  
**and good woman or man that lived**  
**and died unknown beyond the village**  
**or lane that chance placed her or him**  
**in.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**January 31. 2020**

## **ETERNITY**

**Eternity is not an endless extension of time; Eternity has no affinity to time; for time is a fiction.**

**Eternity is nothing, cannot be a thing, for a thing cannot bring forth anything.**

**Eternity is not an existent but it breeds all existents.**

**The reality of Eternity is above and beyond all existence.**

**Eternity is the creative intelligence, or better said, the intelligent creativity that brings about all existents.**

**This notion is hard to grasp because it runs counter to common language and common modes of thought.**

**But without this notion we cannot find spiritual reality in any way intelligible; cannot have metaphysical understanding of reality.**

**Eternity is the form of the creative intelligence, intelligent creativity, that is the creator of the All, the Whole.**

**Eternity exists not, if it were an existent it would have been incapable of bringing forth any existents.**

**We can never find reality ultimately intelligible unless we break through our inveterate identification of reality with objective existence.**

**The only reality is non-existent spiritual reality.**

**This is not a paradox and is not meant as a paradox.**

**We cannot think of reality or speak about reality until we forget the language of physics and of our daily life.**

**In our daily life and in our proud scientific work and AI and IT we are living in a dream world, strictly speaking.**

**The dream world in which we live our daily life is, strictly speaking, a creation of the human mind, and in saying this we are not denying its existent actuality or actual existence.**

**I insist on speaking of Reality rather than having refuge in the tame word Bing because I think it important to break up our habitual identification of reality with objective existence.**

**We cannot peremptorily forbid the loose use of the term reality in common speech but in philosophizing ‘reality’ should be restricted to mean only spiritual reality; at least I beg readers to remember that in my writ-**

ings ‘reality’ should regularly be taken to refer to spiritual reality.

Parmenides said, “*tauto gar esti noeintekai einai*” and in Plato, except in idiomatic phrases, *alêtheia* always means not actual objective existence but ideal reality.

We live in reality in spontaneous deeds of love and in creative thinking and in artistic creativity, else we plod in the dream world of our common life.

I know that few will understand what I have been saying. Plotinus would have understood me and Shelley and Meister Eckhart.

D. R. Khashaba

February 4, 2020

## **KANT REDUTES**

### **BERTRAND RUSSELL**

**In Hades Kant was in Gautama Garden, walking up and down Wordsworth Path, apparently in an agitated mood, not even glancing at the lovely daffodils hemming the path on both sides.**

**Phaedrus, passing by, addressed him, “What is it, Immanuel? Are you expecting something?”**

**“Yes,” he answered, “I am awaiting the arrival of Bertrand Russell, a brilliant mathematician and excellent essayist. His soul has just begun her journey hither.”**

**“Mathematician and essayist, you say. Not a philosopher?”**

**“No, except in his general essays; there he is a good philosopher in the wider sense of the term.”**

**“So what is that to you? Has he wronged you in any way?”**

**“I forgive him his trashing of my Transcendental System. He is not the only one who has failed to understand my Critique. But I have a refutation of his position on causation that I am eager to confront him with.”**

**“Why don’t you rehearse it on me? You know how mad I am about such arguments.”**

**“Well, there’s nothing better to while away the time. I will tell you. But first, to be honest, I must say that I cannot take credit – not wholly, at any rate – for the refutation. I have only half a share in it.”**

**“You make me more eager to hear it.”**

**“It is in some way a curious story. The other day I was reading something written by Bertrand Russell. Not one of his general essays that I enjoy reading but something on the notion of cause. The gist of it was that we have no need for the notion of cause since the Laws pf Nature suffice to explain natural processes. I started musing: it is the notion or concept of cause that is the ground and the rationale of all the laws of nature. Besides, given the laws of nature, how do they explain the processes of nature? Do they have power to determine natural processes? We are back where Humr left us: we have successions without rational connection.”**

**“At this point”, Kant comtinued. “I had a strange experience. In a trance**

**I was taken to the Future. Somehow I was made to feel that it was a future time not far distant from Russell's time. I saw someone; I could not identify him and could not see him distinctly. He was apparently reading that same Russell paper on the notion of cause. I heard him say — was he speaking to someone? Was he reflecting within his mind? Was he perhaps writing? I could not perceive that distinctly, but his words reached me clear and plain. He said:**

**'Let us, along with Russell's position take what Kant had written in another context where, after stating that what gives actions moral worth is "that the moral law should directly determine the will", he says that "as to the question how a law can be directly and of itself a determining principle of the will (which is the essence of morality), this is, for human reason, an insoluble problem and**

**identical with the question: how a free will is possible.”\***

**“Then came the curious part when the stranger continued: ‘Taking this along with that we can say that the only causation that has any meaning for us is the causation of a free will. Then the statement that the processes of nature accord with laws can only have meaning on the analogy of moral activity or poetic, artistic, and intellectual creativity. That means, we have to see Nature acting spontaneously, creatively, and freely. And that is to see Nature as living, intelligent, and free. That is how poets have always seen her. That is how our ancestors who were living in communion with Nature saw her before they were corrupted by taking conceptual fictions too placidly.’”**

**Kant continued: “ I heard the stranger saying that and was much**

**impressed. I confess that is not what I had in mind when I wrote the words quoted by the stranger. But I will confront Russell with the argument.”**

**Phaedrus looking ahead, said, “Isn’t he the one over there coming in our direction escorted by Hermes?”**

**“I suppose he is.”**

**“Well. I leave you to thrash it with him. I would have liked to be present, but I have promised Ibn Sina to attend his debate with Aristotle. I wish you a pleasant discussion.”**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**February 17, 2002**

**\**Critique of Practical Reason***

## **MEANING OF LIFE**

**“Whence are we, and why are we?”**  
Thus exclaimed Shelley in grief and agony (in *Adonais*, Shelley’s elegy for Keats). Let me give my answer to both questions in a few words before giving it in detail.

**I am convinced that we can never have a factual answer to either question but we can have a creative answer to the second question.**

**Whence are we? To that neither philosophy can give us an answer nor, I maintain, science, but I do not want at this point to digress into my rea-**

**sons for this assertion, reasons that I have given again and again in my writings.**

**Why are we? To this too we have no factual answer. But we have, and throughout human history, have had the audaciously creative answer: We forge the purpose and the meaning of our life, we create the world we live in.**

**“We create the world we live in”:** physically speaking this us a lie, for despite all our haughty bragging about our ;knowledge that is power’ and our dazzling achievements in technology, AI, and It, we are very much at the mercy of Nature, powerless in the face of storms, tsunamis, floods, earthquakes. Volcanoes, draughts. And when we foolishly tamper with Nature with our gas emissions, plastic pollutions, nuclear

waste dumps, we cannot escape the punishment.

But subjectively, that we create the world we live in is the truth, the whole truth. The few wise humans live in worlds of love and peace and beauty and, whatever may befall them, enjoy the equanimity of self-integrity and self-possession. For the wise, life is tragic and can bring pain and sorrow but nothing can injure their inner worth. The not so wise live in worlds of dreams, but they are their own worlds, worlds formed and elected by themselves and for themselves. Even the utterly foolish, the tyrants, the criminals, the pleasure-seekers, live in their own worlds though they be worlds founded on negation, the negation of all value and all reality.

What I have been saying above is nothing but an amplification of Mil-

**ton's “The mind is its own place and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.” Indeed, poets are the true philosophers.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**February 21, 2020**

## WHERE TO FIND PLATO

The *Phaedrus* was written maybe ten, maybe fifteen, years after Plato had written his first dialogue, yet I am convinced that at that earlier time Plato had already convinced himself of the folly of confiding philosophical thought to writing (*Phaedrus* 274c-278b). Consequently – however bizarre this may sound – it is folly to expect to find Plato's philosophy plainly set in his writings.'

What do we find in Plato's writings? The *Phaedo* is a perfect exemplar; let us see what we have there.

**We have in the first place a moving, inspiring dramatic account of the last hours and the last moments of a beautiful soul.**

**We have the ideal of the philosophical life as the best life for a human being, preached in fiery words and in winged flights of poetry.**

**We have long-drawn arguments purportedly to prove the immortality of the soul — arguments which, throughout the dialogue, are confessed to be non-conclusive and that no one has considered valid, not even among firm believers in personal survival.**

**We have in a craftily camouflaged passage (95e-102a) what we might call Plato's Critique of Human Understanding, delineating the source and the boundaries of knowledge, which we may outline as follows:**

- All knowledge – including knowledge of things in the outer world – and all understanding comes from the mind and from nowhere else.
- Investigating things in the natural world gives us ‘know-how’ about things but does not reveal the essence of those things.
- Investigating ideas in the mind gives us clarity of vision, understanding our aims and purposes and understanding of ourselves but – purely as investigation of pure ideas – does not give us any knowledge about anything outside the mind.

**Isn’t this philosophy? In a broad sense of the term, yes, we might call it philosophy, but it is not the highest reach of philosophy, not what a true philosophic spirit craves and aspires to.**

**A true-born philosopher is haunted by the mystery of Being, the mystery of Life, the mystery of Understanding and aspires to commune with the Whole, the All, and merge with the Whole, the All.**

**But we are not ever given to achieve that. However, the true philosophic spirit finds that within herself she can create visions of the Whole, the All — visions that appease the burning craving, the yearning, the aspiration. Is that self-deception? No, for our vision of the Whole makes us whole; we find within ourselves the ultimate reality of all things, we come to see within ourselves, or better said, we come to live within ourselves the ultimate realities of Life, of Understanding, of Being.**

**But these visions are as ineffable as they are unfathomable. They can**

**only be intimated in myth and parable. Hence Plato speaks of the unspeakable Form of the Good and of the ascent to the Form of Beauty or to the celestial abode of the Forms and the mystics speak of Nothernesses and Clouds of Unknowing and one speaks of Creative Eternity.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**February 24, 2020**

## **COSMIC TRAGEDY**

**Dear Reader, if in what follows you detect a whiff of insanity, put it not to my senility, but rather consider that in nearing Death we become prophetic.**

**The tragedy of human life, the tragedy of all life. is rooted in the tragedy of Existence.**

**God is not, because It is beyond Being. God is sheer Creativity, sheer outflowing Love.**

**God, outflowing Love, creates. It creates existents. To exist is to be vanishing. Vishnu and Shiva are not two but one.**

**That is the tragedy of all Existence. Not only does this ‘too, too solid flesh’ melt; the solid mountain is in process of unbeing, of rendering back the gift of being it was lent.**

**All perfection, im being perfect passes away. The beautiful tune to sound must end, the lovely flower in blooming withers.**

**The happiest moment envelops a pang and the deepest sorrow is tinged with solace.**

**Death is restful; it pains not the dead but the living.**

**In all of this there is no evil but the Necessity of transient Becoming wherein alone Being has fleeting refuge.**

**And this does not exonerate the madness of our destroying the environment, abolishing the con-**

**ditions of life for whole species of animals, and hastening the final doom of humankind. This is not tragic vanishing; it is chaotic stupidity.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**February 27, 2020**

## METAPHYSICS OF FREEDOM

**Discussions of Freedom are commonly marred by the confusion of freedom with choice or deliberation, or at best by identifying freedom with autonomy. But true freedom, metaphysical freedom, is far above and beyond choice and deliberation or autonomy.**

**Choice and deliberation:** choice and deliberation can be coerced or determined heteronomously but even when relatively free are necessarily conditioned by antecedents. Take a person making a choice between going out for a walk and finishing a task he had begun. He might be under doc-

tor's .orders to take the walk or under master's orders to finish the task he had begun. This is coercion, mild and amicable or stern and authoritative. He might also be subject to a religious or quasi-religious belief that it is sinful to prefer pleasure over duty. This is heteronomous determination. But it might be that none of these influences is in play. He is free to choose but still the choice is not arbitrary; numerous antecedents, bodily and mental, come into play and condition the outcome. At this point I have to stress that I advisedly say that the antecedents condition but do not determine the choice; for as against the determinists I maintain that the outcome is an act of free will. (I have previously discussed this point at length ; see “Free Will as Creativity” in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009, and uploaded as a separate pdf.)

**Autonomy:** For Spinoza behaviour in the light of adequate ideas is action, is autonomous, and is all the freedom that Spinoza's espousal of strict causal determinism permits. Behaviour swayed by inadequate ideas is passion and is bondage to extraneous forces. All of this agrees implicitly with the position of Socrates. When a person is clear about his aims, values, ideals, he does what is right and consistent with virtue and is true to his proper human character as a rational being. When the aims, values, and ideals are confused or adulterated the person is in the clutch of ignorance. Again I stress that to act in accord with one's wholesome values and sane ideals is to exercise free will. Indeed, the simplest of our bodily acts, when I stretch my arm to shake hands with a friend, when I walk to the window to look at the rain showering on the outside, when I take

a sip of coffee, all of these are acts of free will even if, as in the case of the sip of coffee, habit makes it hardly conscious. Still, all of that, choice, deliberation, voluntary acts in the course of our daily life, however free from constraint, however truly issuing from clear adequate ideas, however true to sane values and ideals, do not represent the highest level, purest forms, of freedom, metaphysical freedom. Yet the freedom of autonomy can rise to the level of spiritual freedom. In that sense it is absolute, nothing can constrain it, nothing can tarnish it, insofar as it is internal. The martyr on the cross, Giordano Bruno amid the flames, Socrates draining the hemlock, are free. This is the freedom of Stoicism, freedom of the inward serenity that rises above all tyranny, all oppression, and all chance.

**Freedom:** True freedom, metaphysical freedom, is creativity, intelligent creativity, creative intelligence. We are free in the truest sense in spontaneous gestures of love and in the creations of art, poetry, and philosophical thinking. We are only truly and completely free when we are consumed in outflowing love or in outflowing poetic and philosophical creativity. The freedom of creative intelligence we see as an instance of, and is our model for, the free creativity of all Reality. To my mind, there is no way we can understand the ceaseless coming and vanishing of forms in Nature but to see ultimate Reality as sheer intelligent creativity — what in my metaphysical vision I name Creative Eternity. I cannot conceive God otherwise than as a Shakespeare dreaming dreams. Plato makes no explicit mention of free creativity but his works amply reveal the insight. In

the *Timaeus* God fashions the world because, being good, he wants all things to be good, In the *Republic* the Form of the Good, which cannot be defined or so much as known, brings forth Being and Understanding, the notion of *tokos en kalōi* (in the *Symposium*) is itself pregnant with the notion of intelligent creativity.

Two side notes: (1) I am not willing to descend from the heights of creative intelligence to discuss once again the superstition of causal necessity. (2) My metaphysical views, as I have repeatedly explained, are visions that lend intelligibility to the mysteries and riddles that surround us. I do not say that they are true of the outer world.

D. R. Khashaba

February 29, 2020

## **EVIL**

**I believe that there is no evil in Nature. In other words, I do not see evil as a metaphysical problem but as a psychological problem.**

**Let me first clear out the negative side of my statement. In nature there is no evil. There is pain and death and catastrophe. These are not evil but elements in natural process. In human consciousness death, not only the death of other humans but of all that has life and the passing away of all form — these are tragic, but it is unwise to regard them as evil. Shiva is not evil but is the correlate aspect of**

**Vishnu; neither can have being without the other.**

**There are those who argue that without evil there could be no good. To me this is absurd. Opposites that imply one another and neither of which can have meaning without being opposed to the other are relative terms in the strictest sense: bigger and smaller, heavier and lighter, etc. Good is not such a relative term but is a positive value. In strict logic, there can be a happy life without any touch of unhappiness. That in the actual life of human beings we do not meet with such unsullied happiness is due simply to the complexity of human existence.**

**I maintain that there is evil only in human kife and human relations. But even here I would strictly limit the application of the term. An individual may commit error and may**

**indulge in folly that result in harm to the erring and foolish individual and may also extend to other individuals but as long as the harm is confined to the erring individual and as long as the harm to others is unintended, I think such error and folly may be called regrettable but it would not be right to call it evil.**

**I maintain that intentionally or knowingly causing pain or harm to another living being is morally evil. And the knotty question is: Why do we have so much of that all around us? We are drowned in moral evil and the main cause of human misery is moral evil.**

**We need to rake up the question on two levels. For all we know, conceptual thinking (at any rate highly developed conceptual thinking), is peculiar to the human species. The human mind can represent to itself what**

**is not immediately present. Hence human beings can not only lay store for the morrow but can apprehend and dread the morrow. They build for themselves many desires and aims and dreams. These are liable to get confused, obscured, entangled. The aims and purposes and values of one person may clash with those of another. The resulting chaos within an individual's consciousness tends to narrow the individual's outlook, prospects, vision. Egotism and egocentrism result. Brother without shame says: "Am I my brother's keeper?"**

**In addition to the complexities and entanglements to which the individual is normally prone civilization adds others. A primitive tribe is virtually a united family. Everybody is everybody's sibling or parent or child. Simple rules of conduct apply to all and are obeyed by all. In a city it is hard for an individual to have a**

**feeling of kinship towards another.  
Even a passably decent citizen rarely  
loses a night's sleep over injury done  
to another.**

**The last two paragraphs above  
are necessarily sketchy and conse-  
quently hazy and foggy. Each of the-  
se, to be properly developed, requires  
a bulky volume. Nevertheless, I hope  
the reader will find them saying  
something.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**March 1, 2020**

## **SHELLEY AS PHILOSOPHER**

**Every genuine poet is philosophical but not every poet is a philosopher, in other words, all inspired poetry is rich in philosophical insight but not every poet is concerned with philosophical questions. Shelley was one of the exceptionP.al few and mulled philosophical questions: his poetry overflows with profound insight and he also dealt with philosophical problems in conceptual terms. I can easily imagine that, had he not died so young, he would have left us works of philosophy to match his poetical**

**works. This is not mere fancy on my part: in the preface to his Prometheus Unbound Shelley wrote:**

**“Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Æschylus rather than Plato as my model.”**

**I have half a mind to write a book on Shelley as Philosopher, but the idea is really crazy. Apart from the fact that it is foolish to think of engaging in any major work when I am well into my ninety-third year, my fading eyesight and my general health condition are likely to get in the way. However, if I am given the time and the opportunity, the work would be hemmed by the following constraints:**

**(1) I am not a literary critic and what I write would not be a work of literary criticism but a collection of marginal notes on Shelley's non-poetical writings. (2) I cannot make, and would not pretend to be making, a study of Shelley's Philosophy. Shelley's philosophy is to be sought in his poetical works and to seek it there demands a close study of those works, for which I have neither the time nor the capability. What I would do would be to offer some thoughts on Shelley's approach to certain philosophical questions. Naturally it would be impossible not to touch on the theme; it is too weighty and too closely connected with Shelley's general outlook and basic convictions, but it would not be my main subject.**

**It may be that my posting this note to the blog will prove to be the birth and the burial of the whole crazy idea.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**March 3, 2020**

**P.S.: If I do start working on this project, this will no doubt affect postings to the blog, so this note is intended to alert Visitors and beg them to bear with me and also to keep visiting since I hope to be able to post other papers.**

## **METAPHYSICS OF LOVE**

**When Shelley said “One word is too often profaned / For me to profane it, / One feeling too falsely disdained / For thee to disdain it” he was speaking of Love. Indeed Love has been much profaned, much disdained, much traduced.**

**Even the divine Plato, the Philosopher of Love, could be misled into stating that love is a desire for possession of the beautiful or the good, and that in the *Symposium*, the dialogue devoted to praising Love. Love is not a desire to possess but a yearning to give or rather a need to give. Even**

erotic love at its zenith is not a desire but a longing to endow the beloved with all good and to unite with the beloved. Plato in the depth of his soul knew that: this comes out clearly in the *Timaeus* where he says that God fashioned the world because, being good, he wanted all things to be good. In the *Symposium* when the Lover reaches the end of his travail and attains to the vision of absolute Beauty he procreates good and beautiful words and deeds.

To my mind, the only way to find the world intelligible is to see ultimate Reality as creativity, intelligent creativity, and as such, Love; for Love is an outflowing of good. I cannot understand the incessant becoming of the universe except as an eternal creative outflow of Being — an outflow not predetermined but spontaneous and free like the delighted gasp of one surprised by the appearance of beau-

tiful form, like the flowering of a verse in Shakespeare's mind, like the birth of a tune in Mozart's mind.

The writer of the Fourth Gospel could just as well have opened his Gospel with the words: *en archê ên hê Agapê kai hê Agapê ên pros ton Theon kai Theon ên hê Agapê*. The Gospel verse “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” to the worldly-wise is foolish nonsense but Gandhi wielding that principle as his sole weapon was mightier than the Empire on which ‘the sun never set’.

The calamity of humankind is that humans persist in being too clever. Could humans believe in Love, could we bring our children up in love and teach them to love – to love beauty, love pets, love friends – could

**we all love the Earth our Mother and  
find it not in our heart to harm her,  
we would all live in peace and har-  
mony.**

**Metaphysically and ethically  
Love is the first of First Principles  
and if the worldly-wise say that Love  
is madness let us say with Plato that  
the greatest of goods come to us  
through divine madness.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**March 6, 2020**

## METAPHYSICS OF INTEGRITY

In the *Republic* Plato says, “He who sees things as a whole is philosophical, he who doesn’t isn’t”, *ho men gar sunoptikos dialektikos, ho de mē ou,* (537c). The philosophic mind is by nature integrative. It does not only seek to disclose the relatedness of things, it even forges relations between disparate things to form new integral wholes. What are the horoscopes but arbitrary formations of arbitrarily picked up distinct stars? When lazily watching sailing clouds

**we reshape them in various forms projected by our imagination.**

**Just as numerous things randomly strewn do not form a meaningful unit, so also a single blank sheet does not mean anything. For a thing to have meaning, to be understandable, it has to be seen as a whole of interrelated parts. I hardly need to give examples.**

**If the mind finds that integrative wholeness is a condition of understanding, and if the mind is necessitated by its nature to consider real what agrees with reason and only what agrees with reason, then the mind is also necessitated by its nature to see integrative wholeness as a condition of Reality (Being). In other words, thinkers who find that reason is our only guide to a satisfactory conception of Reality must see integrative wholeness as a condition of**

**Reality, in other words, as an original dimension of ultimate Reality, that is, as a final Metaphysical Principle.**

**Are we deceived in taking reason for our sole guide to — to what? If we say “to Reality” then, in my opinion, we would be outstepping our proper limitations: I prefer to say that reason is our sole guide to understanding Reality, that is, to a conception that gives us the satisfaction of finding Reality intelligible. I dare not say that my vision of Reality is true of the World but I say it is the only way I can find the World intelligible. If you find my position too convoluted, I see it as the only way to reconcile the humility demanded by our human limitations and our unquenchable thirst for understanding.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**March 8, 2002**

## **METAPHYSICS OF DIVINITY**

**I wish we could have a satisfactory alternative to the term ‘God’. The word has over the millennia been encumbered with so many diverse and incongruous meanings and amassed so many unhappy associations that one would wish to leave it out of all philosophical discussion. But on the other hand the word has also been enriched with profound and valuable philosophical, mystic, moral, and aesthetic insights that there can hardly be any serious philosophical discourse without allusion to the divine.**

**Of all notions relating to the divine there is none more inane than the monotheistic idea of a creator outside the universe making all things out of nothing. For if our quest is for the origin of all Being, the idea of a transcendent creator only shoves the riddle one step backwards and leaves it standing. It is unfortunate that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have saddled Western thought with their monotheism(s) making materialist atheism seemingly the only alternative to the inanity of monotheism. In India and China thinkers enjoyed greater freedom in pursuing questions of ultimate realities and values and could reach profound metaphysical insights.**

**In facing the primordial problem of Being we have no alternative but to confess it to be an ultimate mystery and indeed , in respect of all ultimate questions, we must humbly**

**acknowledge that we are plunged in unfathomable mysteries.**

**But we are at the heart of the Mystery and feel ourselves part of the Mystery and we long to comprehend, to unite with, the Mystery. Thus humans, from the beginning of human self-awareness, created myths, created gods, created heavens beyond heaven and life beyond life. And the creations of the philosophers, their magnificent systems, their astute reasonings, are of the selfsame stuff.**

**But it is not all vanity. Our yearning to comprehend the All, our aspiration to merge with the All, is of the essence of our spiritual being. When we eat, when we procreate, we are living organisms: when we aspire to the All we are spiritual beings — and though the very notion of the All is of our own creation, in creating the idea we rise above our physical being**

**and create for ourselves our spiritual realm.**

**That is what philosophers have been doing all the time but they were not fully aware of what they were doing. They fancied they were discovering Reality, disclosing the reality of the World. The only Reality, the only World, they discover is the Reality, the World, they created for themselves. And philosophers wrangled with each other, refuted each other, not knowing that every individual philosopher was speaking of his own peculiar world. And clever outsiders who never experienced the irksome nagging of a philosophical question thought all philosophers were a bunch of crazed fools.**

**Back to God. How do I picture God? To my mind God cannot be a being; a being cannot be the source of all being. My God is Creative Eterni-**

**ty. Many thinkers have spoken of the eternity of God but their notion of eternity is time-infected. Time is a fiction, a useful fiction, and like all useful fictions is riddled with contradictions. In Nature there is no time.**

**Thinkers were led by their own reasoning to that conclusion: time cannot be (= have being, = exist) since it cannot rest but must be always passing; and they were puzzled. Their astute and intriguing discussions and controversies about time were about the practical usages of the fiction, the measurement of the fiction, modes of reference to and speaking about time. Of time itself they said nothing; how could they speak about what is not? But worst of all is that in thinking about eternity they thought of eternity in terms of time. Eternity to them was static time, extended time, etc., etc. We cannot have a viable notion of**

**Eternity unless we free it of all affinity to time.**

**To me Eternity is one with Creativity and creativity is not the creativity of a creative being, not even of creative intelligence: it is sheer intelligent creativity and Eternity is its spark, begging pardon for the metaphor as a necessity of language. Eternity as the fount and source of all being is above and beyond all being. I see all being, which is essentially perpetual becoming, as an outflow of Creative Eternity. The model for this is our own creativity in the outburst of a smile, a yell of joy, a sigh of compassion, and in the free outflow of thought which, I insist, is spontaneous, creative, unpredictable. All of this is free spontaneity untouched by time. I see ultimate Reality not as a Supreme Being or any Being whatever but as Creative Eternity understood as sheer, pure spontaneous cre-**

**ativity and I see the world as a perpetually vanishing outflow of created forms.**

**I advance no argument. I make no claim of truth. This is an imaginative vision through which I confront the incomprehensibility, the clouded mysteriousness of the world surrounding me, declaring: Here is my own coherent, intelligible world. Am I fooling myself? No. My world of values and dreams and ideal visions is the true, the real, spiritual realm in which I have my life as an intelligent being — this is the philosophical life preached by Plato as the best life for a human being.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**March 12, 2020**

## **PARADOX OF METAPHYSICS**

**The whole of my philosophy – pivot, spring, all-in-all – rests on a paradox. The origin of all being, I find, cannot be a being, a thing that has being. I say that the source of all being cannot be an entity or a mind or an intelligence but must be above and beyond Being.**

**All being that we know is in incessant becoming; its very essence is that incessant becoming. Hence I say that the origin of all being is Will, but I hasten to say that we must not personalize or reify the Will but must understand it as sheer creativeness.**

**The First Principle is not a creative reality: creativity is the reality and reality is creativity.**

**For Western philosophic thinking this is hard to absorb especially since Aristotle shaped the bases of that thought. But the insight is foundational in Chinese and Hindu thinking. The Tao is above and beyond being and the Brahmanic Trimurti is above and beyond Being. In the beginnings of Western philosophy Heraclitus spoke of the Logos which is not a first being but a first principle and for Plato the Form of the Good, the begetter of Being and Life and Understanding, is above and beyond all being and life and understanding. All of this is in complete agreement with mystic experience which in attaining its profoundest vision confronts Nothingness, Night, Unknowning.**

**Thus for me Reality as the Ultimate of Ultimates is not a creative reality but a pure Creativity outflowing in ever coming-to-be, ever passing away, formations of love, beauty, intelligence.**

**To closing notes:** (1) If I seem to end on an idealistic optimistic note it is not that I am insensible to the misery and folly that engulfs human life. (2) As I have repeatedly explained, my philosophic position is only a vision through which I can find the world making sense while I confess that we know nothing but the world outside other than what we imaginatively picture to ourselves.

**D. R. Khashaba**

**March 14, 2020**

## **PLATO IN A NUTSHELL**

**A profound thinker's thought is a living organism. Any cell of the body is pregnant with the whole and can reveal the whole. I will illustrate this by reflections on a short seminal statement from the *Republic* and then further highlight the illustration by a passage from the *Phaedrus*.**

**Socrates had been answering the charge that philosophers in society are either harmful scoundrels or harmless simpletons, then goes on (at 490a-b) to say: “Shall we not be offering a reasonable defence when we say that —**

**“*a true philosopher, being by nature driven to strive towards reality (to on),***

[Here we have at once the nature of the philosopher and the nature of philosophy, which is an inborn compulsion to seek reality.]

*“will not rest in the multiple that appear to be (epi tois doxazomenois einai pollois),*

[The philosopher inwardly (intuitively) knows that the reality he hungers for is other than all that surrounds him in the natural world.]

*“but goes on and does not slacken or peter out in his love (tou erôtos),*

[Plato's use of the term *erôs* for the love of philosophy is significant as philosophy is to him a passion for a mode of life, creative, procreative.]

*“until he grasps the very essence of each reality (auto ho estin hekastos tês phuseôs)*

[The quest of the philosopher is not for actual things as such but for the inner invisible essence of all things.]

*“by that in his soul which it befits to grasp such and it befits what is akin–,*

[The affinity of the soul to the real – indeed to the divine as affirmed in the Phaedo – is crucial in Plato’s thought and it is in virtue of this affinity that we are given to know reality, or as we may put it, it is in knowing our own reality, and only in knowing our own reality, that we know reality.]

*“approaching and uniting with (plēsiasas kai migeis) what has real being (tōi onti ontōs),*

[The phrase ‘mingling with what has real being; is not a mere figure of speech, for in Plato’s thought philosophy is not an intellectual exercise but a life experience, a mystic mode of life.]

*“begetting intelligence and reality*  
*(noun kai alêtheian),*

[The philosophic life, being life in the true sense of the term, is an unceasing flow of goodness and intelligence and reality. This is emphasized in the climax of Diotima's speech in the Symposium; and in the Republic the Form of the Good brings forth being and life and intelligence.]

*“has understanding and true life  
and nourishment (gnoiê te kai  
alêthôs zôiê kai trephoito)*

[Here is further confirmation that the philosophic life is a way of life, the life proper to an intelligent being, the best possible life for a human being as the whole of the Republic from beginning to end is intended to show.]

*“and thus is delivered of his labour, but not before then?”*

[The philosopher's yearning for reality is a thirst for the fullness of the intelligent life in which alone the essential reality of a human being finds realization and expression. Plato did not leave us, and never intended to leave us, an abstract system of thought; his whole life endeavour was to inspire the aspiration to a life proper to an intelligent being.]

In the *Phaedrus* Socrates had started his speech in atonement for his earlier disparagement of Eros in Imitation of Lysias's discourse. Let us notice that what follows is a myth within a myth and that it comes after Socrates had given an evidently spurious 'proof' of the 'immortality of the soul', a proof which, if taken seriously, would apply only to the soul as principle of life and would extend to every fly and worm as much

as to humans and gods. Let this be a reminder to us that Plato is most earnest when most playful and is least earnest when he argues most studiously. Socrates goes on to give an account of the life of the gods (and other souls) in heaven and the region beyond heaven. After what I have said so far the relevance of the following passage will, I hope, be self-evident, needing no further comment or clarification.

“The region beyond heaven none of our poets has ever sung nor ever will sing its praises worthily; however this is how it is — for I must dare speak the truth (*ἀληθὲς*) since it is of what is true (*ἀληθείας*) that I speak. Colourless and formless and intangible it is, an essence really real (*οὐσία ὄντως οὖσα*); visible only to the mind, the pilot of the soul; and all knowledge of reality is only of that. Since a god’s mind

feeds on intelligence and pure knowledge (and likewise the mind of any soul inasmuch as it would receive what is proper to it), the soul beholding the real for a while is delighted and, gazing on the real, is nourished and remains in bliss until the revolution brings it around to the same position once more. On the way around it beholds essential Justice and essential Temperance and the essence of Knowledge — not the knowledge wedded to generation, nor knowledge of the variable that we now call real but knowledge of what is really real. And having beheld and feasted on the vision of the really real, the soul descends into heaven and having come home the charioteer brings the horses to the manger and gives them ambrosia to eat and nectar to drink.” (*Phaedrus* 247c-e)

D. R. Khashaba

March 18, 2020



## **PURPOSE OF LIFE**

**What is the purpose of life? The question is too indefinite to be meaningful. It is best to say that life is an end in itself. Every living thing lives out its nature, its essence if you will, and that, we can reasonably say, is its meaning and its purpose, as much as music, from the chirping of a bird to Beethoven's Ninth, is its own meaning, is own purpose, its own end. If we picture God as having consciousness of particulars then we can say that is how It 'sees' a worm, a rat, a toad. That this is not an unreasonable view can be appreciated by considering the analogy of how the biologist sees the-**

**se same creatures. No doubt to Darwin the least bug that troubled his sleep was more rich in interest and significance than even any of his fellow scientists.**

**But the question about the purpose of life and specifically of human life continues to be insistent for us human beings. When human beings acquired conceptual thinking and language (which, in my view are inseparable), however that may have come about, we lost as much as we gained. For it is only in very rare moments that a human being enjoys the zest of life and the exuberance of living enjoyed (as i am convinced) by a frolicking kitten. And that is the source of our puzzlement about the purpose of life.**

**In acquiring conceptual thinking human beings, as individuals, became responsible for what they do with**

**their own lives. They created for themselves aims, purposes, values, hopes and fears. Even what gives us the purest and highest delight is clouded by our awareness that all value, as all that exists, is fated to pass away.**

**Conceptual thinking gave birth to imagination and imagination gave us a whole world of faery beings, meanings, values. This gave us a, strictly speaking, metaphysical plane of being in which [perhaps more correctly ‘on which’] we enjoy our spiritual life. But alas! as healthy imagination gave us the ideals of Beauty, Amity, Mercy, sickly imagination bred false aims and delusionary values. Macbeth would not have killed the King had his imagination not pictured to him a life of false glory and power.**

This brings us back to the question about the purpose of life and, to my mind, we have already answered the question when we said at the outset that life is an end in itself and that every form of life lives out its nature and that, we may say, is to fulfill its true nature. But in the case of human beings there comes in a complication. Since human beings no longer live simply their animal nature but have given themselves another nature, or rather as many different natures as there are individual human beings, the question arises: which nature? Perhaps Diogenes of Sinope wanted to live out simply the life of a living being, but he could not escape his acquired nature as a thinking being. [I leave aside the intricate problem of the manner of acquisition.) He could not escape that and hence he had to philosophize his choice of a particular manner of life.

**Perhaps it may not be unreasonable to say that all necessarily do live out our ‘ide’ [to choose a neutral term] of human life — our conception of what human life is or should be or at best can be. Most of us do this at a minimal level of awareness [I am trying to evade the self-contradiction of referring to an unconscious idea or conception.] But for those of us who pride themselves on being thinking beings (and it is to these that the question presents itself insistently) the question resolves itself into: what form of life is natural for or is best for an intelligent being? In other words: what mode of life is most fulfilling for a human being as an intelligent being? I believe this is how the moral problem presented itself to Socrates, to Plato, and equally to Aristotle.**

**Thus in seeking to answer the question about the purpose of life we**

**have equated the purpose of life with the fulfillment of one's true being. I think that agrees with, and indeed is the ground of, my saying (as I have always been saying) that integrity is the first principle of morality. What an intelligent being aims at is the ‘completeness’, the self-sufficiency, of one's character and mode of life. I believe this view underlies the ideal of Stoic philosophy and agrees with Spinoza's conception of autonomy as the characteristic of a good life.**

A few days ago I read Susan Wolf's *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters* (two lectures delivered at Princeton University in 2007) arguing for the meaningfulness of life, “understanding meaningfulness as an attribute lives can have that is not reducible to or subsumable under either happiness, as it is ordinarily understood, or morality.” Further on she explains: “The most obvious examples of what I have in mind occur

**when we act out of love for individuals about whom we deeply and especially care.” Still further she considerably broadens the scope of “we deeply and especially care (about)”. I found that beautiful, insightful, and enlightening. But I see it as simply another version of what I have in mind when I speak of integrity as the character and end of a purposeful life, for in my philosophy integrity and intelligibility are original dimensions of the same reality.**

**D. R. Khashaba  
March 21, 2020**

**P.S. The common religious tying up of the meaning or purpose of life with seeking reward or avoiding punishment in the after-life only degrades morality and impoverishes life. Although Plato uses the reward and punishment argument, especially in his eschatological myths, his advocating of the philosophical life as the as**

**the best – as, we might say, - the most fulfilling – life for a human being is quite independent of the reward and punishment argument. When we say approvingly of a life that it is a rewarding life we have of course to understand the word as meaning rewarding-in-itself, fulfilling, or, as Susan Wolf says, meaningful.**

## THE VISION OF BEAUTY

**It might sound like a stale platitude to say that Plato's *Symposium* is a work of genius. But if by a work of genius we mean a work imbued with inner life and creative intelligence that in itself and of itself continually sheds new light and inspiration, then I know not how else to designate it. I suppose that it is the *Symposium*, even more than the *Phaedo*, that was the prime inspiration for Plotinus. A most profound and seminal dictum of Plotinus's becomes resplendent with lucidity and reveals its inmost secret in the light of a passage in the *Symposium*.**

**Every student of Plato knows the inspired passage at the climax of Diotima's speech (210e ff.) from which I extract the following lines (tr. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff):**

**"You see, the man who has been thus far guided in matters of Love, who has beheld beautiful things in the right order and correctly, is coming now to the goal of Loving: all of a sudden he will catch sight of something wonderfully beautiful in its nature; ... First, it always *is* and neither comes to be nor passes away, neither waxes nor wanes. Second, it is not beautiful this way and ugly that way, nor beautiful at one time and ugly at another ..."**

**No doubt every serious student of philosophy must have wondered what this Absolute Beauty might be. Is it an idea? An idea that is not the idea of anything in particular? Is it a vision? Again, a vision that cannot be envisaged? This sends us to two other kindred passages, one in the *Phaedo***

and one in the *Republic* both of which I will quote in full:

“When the soul (mind) all by itself reflects, it moves into that which is pure, always is, deathless, and constant, and being of a like nature to that, remains with that always, whenever it is possible for it to be by itself, and then it rests from wandering, and in the company of that, is constant, being in communion with such; and it is this state that is called *phronēsis* (unbtelligence).”

(*Phaedo* 79d)

“Would we not be making a reasonable defence, when we say that a true lover of knowledge, being by nature drawn towards communion with reality, will not rest in the multiple that appear to be, but goes on and does not slacken or peter out in his love,

until he grasps the very essence  
of each reality by that in his soul  
which it befits to grasp such –  
and it befits what is congenial –,  
approaching and uniting with  
what has real being, begetting in-  
telligence and reality, has under-  
standing and true life and nour-  
ishment and thus is delivered of  
his labour, but not before then?”  
*(Republic 490a-b)*

Again we find ourselves puzzling.  
What is the nature of the understand-  
ing crowning the philosophical en-  
deavor described in the *Phaedo* pas-  
sage? And what is the end of the phil-  
osophical travail spoken of in the *Re-  
public* passage?

Plotinus in a few words reveals to us the heart of the mystery. “Only a soul become beautiful”, he says, “can see beauty in anything.” The fruit of the philosophical quest, the reward of

**philosophical study, is not a truth, is not a thought or thought-system, but an refinement of the soul (mind), a facility or sensibility whereby the mind is endowed with insight and understanding.** That is why when Socrates is pressed in the *Republic* to reveal the highrst study – the cope-stone of the philosopher’s education – he says that the highest study is the Form of the Good, (not ‘the study of the Form of the Good’ as translators mistakenly make him say, but the highst study itself is the Form of the Good) just as the passage quoted from the *Republic* above makes the philosophic travail culminate in uniting with real being. Not in vain does Plato often speak of the philosophic life in the language of initiation into the mysteries and as purification.

**The interpretation given above of Diotima’s speech in the light of Plotinus’s oracular dictum is far-reaching.**

**When Plato speaks of the Idea  
(Form) of Righteousneaa or of Cour-  
age, etc., we should not think of  
Righteousness or Courage, etc., as  
fixed concepts capable of a definition  
as those who, following Aristotle,  
think Socrates in examining his inter-  
locutors is searching for definitions.  
No, emphatically no! Socrates seeks  
to lead his interlocutor to look into  
his own mind where alone, cleansed  
of dross and cleared of confusions  
and false values and illusory ends —  
where alone the mind, made pure,  
whole, and enlightened, can see  
Righteousness where there is an in-  
stance of righteousness, Courage  
where there is an instance of courage,  
Beauty where there is an instance of  
beauty, righteousness, courage, beau-  
ty being modes of his own creative in-  
telligence. That is the true meaning of  
Socrates' insistence in the *Phaedo*  
that it is by Beauty that all things**

**beautiful are beautiful. Socrates' utterance was already pregnant with Plotinus's utterance.**

**Those who seek in philosophy, and those philosophers who try to offer in their philosophies, knowledge or thought-systems, or true accounts of the world, corrupt philosophy. A true philosopher wrestles with the mysteries and puzzles of life and being and understanding, battles with his own thought obscurities and confusions, and reports all that to his readers or his students, not to teach or to give knowledge or wisdom, but to invite them to take part in the wrestling and the battling and get for themselves and by themselves whatever glimpses of light they may glimpse.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**April 26, 2020**

## **PHILOSOPHERS**

**It is humbling to note that of all people philosophers have been the last and the least to heed the Delphic oracle: “Know yourself”. I except only two: Socrates who was prophet more than philosopher and Plato who was poet more than philosopher.**

**During the past week I was trying to comment on Bergson’s “Introduction to Metaphysics”. I had to give it up. In my writings I had been applauding Bergson’s introduction of the notion of duration into philosophy. (Marginally, of all twentieth-century philosophers only Whitehead**

**emphasized the fundamental significance of the notion of duration and elucidated its meaning.) Bergson's notions of intuition and of creativity are also rich contributions to philosophic thinking which have been ignored by philosophers — again with the exception of Whitehead. (In my writings I shun the term 'intuition' because it has been hackneyed by flat and contrary usages but I emphasize the self-evidence of realities in the mind. — All of this is incidental to my present purpose.**

**Trying to comment on Bergson's text I was doubly dismayed: first by what I see as gross misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Plato and Kant, and secondly by what I could only see as a confused, incoherent, and basically flawed understanding of the nature of metaphysical thinking.**

If we take into account what Bergson's contemporaries thought of his philosophy, we will find support for my contention that philosophers are miserably lacking in self-knowledge. Why is that so? To my mind, the reason is that philosophers don't know what they are doing. They falsely believe they give a true account of the actual natural world. From Aristotle through Leibniz to Hegel they were all under that delusion. Not so the poets. Coleridge did not believe that by travelling eastwards he would come to "Where Alph, the sacred river, ran / Through caverns measureless to man" nor did Shelley believe that he could make a pilgrimage to where Prometheus suffered and triumphed.

Only the other day I came across the most succinct definition of metaphysics by Shelley, who was no less a profound philosopher than an inspired poet. He says: "Metaphysics may be defined as an inquiry concerning those things belonging to, or

concerned with, the internal nature of man.” Plato in the *Phaedo*, in the *Symposium*, and chiefly in the *Republic*, describes the philosophic pilgrimage as a journey that begins and ends in the mind, when the philosopher has the mystic experience of glimpsing her/his inner reality. As all mystics unanimously testify, that experience is strictly unspeakable. It cannot be conveyed in any determinate formulation of thought or language. It can only be intimated in myth and parable and metaphor. A philosopher’s imaginative expression of her/his mystic insight into our inner reality (our only model of metaphysical reality) is a personal dream. Imagine someone saying to another, “My dream is true, yours is false”. That actually is what philosophers have been shouting to each other.

I do not expect a philosopher to give me a factual report about the world or any actual ‘state of affairs’. What I expect from a philosopher is no more and no less than what I expect from a poet: to give me images

**into which I weave and mould my own reflections that I may have a glimpse of an intelligible vision of my inner reality. A good philosopher affords me the enjoyment of such a vision; a poor philosopher fails to afford me such a vision. I do not say of this or that philosopher that their vision is true or false. It is only when considering the incidental trappings of a philosophical work that there is room for theoretical criticism as one may find fault with the diction or the imagery of a poem.**

**D. R. Khashaba**  
**March 28, 2020**

# **PHILOSOPHY AS UNIVERSE OF DISCOURSE**

**Throughout my writings I have been trying to put forward an uncommon conception of the nature of philosophical thinking. In this essay I go back to a concept that I introduced in my first book, *Let Us Philosophize* (1998, 2008), and that has ever been fundamental to my philosophic outlook, hoping that by further specifying and articulating the concept it might help men give a clearer and more definite account of metaphysical philosophy as I see it.**

**In *Let Us Philosophize* I wrote:**

**“Our language is our fate. Language shapes reality, the only reality we are capable of apprehending. In language we form our universe of discourse, and that universe defines the limits of intelligibility for us. We can discard our language and adopt another – mathematical, physical, mythical, what you will –, our understanding would still be drawing breath and getting its lifeblood from an ideal universe of discourse.”**

**This speaks of language, all language, and indeed language can simply be defined as a universe of discourse; it constitutes an ideal world in which and through which people sharing the language can have meaningful discourse.**

**[I have my reasoned objection to the use of the acronym UOD.]**

**Within or beside the common language there can be any number of special languages constituting special universes of discourse. A trade jargon constitutes a narrow special universe of discourse. The precise sciences have their special languages constituting special universes of discourse within which and through which they practise not only their professional exchanges but also, strictly speaking, their advanced scientific thinking.**

**Stephen Hawking in explaining the nature of scientific theory wrote:**

**“Any physical theory is always provisional, in the sense that it is only a hypothesis: you can never prove it. No matter how many times the results of experiments agree with some theory, you can never be sure that the next time the result will not contradict the**

**theory. On the other hand, you can disprove a theory by finding even a single observation that disagrees with the predictions of the theory. As philosopher of science Karl Popper has emphasized, a good theory is characterized by the fact that it makes a number of predictions that could in principle be disproved or falsified by observation. Each time new experiments are observed to agree with the predictions the theory survives, and our confidence in it is increased; but if ever a new observation is found to disagree, we have to abandon or modify the theory” (*A Brief History of Time*).**

**To my mind, we can take Hawking’s statement to imply that a scientific theory is no more than an explanatory hypothesis, a special-purpose ‘ideal world’, in other words, universe of discourse.**

**Euclid's geometry constituted such a special universe of discourse and for more than two millennia was regarded as absolute, final, without a rival, until modern mathematicians found out that there are other possible geometries. Einstein forced on scientists the revision of Newton's picture of the world and Quantum theory has left scientists looking for a viable ideal representation of the world.**

**In 2014 I wrote a paper titled “Iniverse of Discourse: a concept and a term we badly need”. I give below the opening portion of that paper:**

**Lewis Mumford in *The Condition of Man* (1944) uses the term ‘idolum’. In the short Glossary appended to the book he defines it thus:**

**“IDOLUM. This term was first used in *The Story of Utopias* (1922) at about the same time Mr. Walter Lippmann coined the expression**

**‘pseudo-environment’ for a similar fact. By idolum I do not mean either an idea or an idol: neither a concept nor a fetich nor an ideology. By idolum I indicate the existence of an ideological ‘field,’ which unites and polarizes, as it were, a number of related images, symbol, ideas, and even artifacts. Idolum is close to the German term *Weltbild* when taken in its literal sense: a picture of the world, that is, the world experienced in and through culture, that people carry in their minds. I prefer it to the term pseudo-environment because as such an idolum is neithr fictitious nor false: it is simply the dominant mental environment of a particular culture, containing both permanently verifiable experiences and temporarily acceptable illusions.” (Lewis Mumford, *The Condition of Man*, 1944, Glossary.)**

**This is similar to a key concept that I have – in complete unawareness of either Mumford’s or Lippman’s term – been empha-**

sizing in my writings under the term “universe of discourse. ...”.

In “The Wittgenstein Enigma” (*The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009) I wrote:

“Thus in the very first sentence of the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein bans metaphysical philosophizing and in so doing creates for himself the dilemma that tore him apart and continued to tear him apart to the end of his life. By defining the world as ‘all that is the case’, he leaves the philosopher without a world. For a philosopher’s proper world, a philosopher’s universe of discourse, is not objective and not objectifiable. It is not a world of actualities but a world of meaning, the intelligible realm. That is what Socrates saw clearly when he renounced the investigation of things *en tois ergois* and decided

**instead to investigate things *en  
tois logois*.”**

**To my mind, Wittgenstein’s fault lay in his unquestioning acceptance of the Empiricist’s universe of discourse as final and all-sufficient. This is the common error of empiricists, materialists, reductionist. A Carnap. aRyle, a Quine, a neuroscientist has a universe of discourse that serves him well in his special field of interest and thinks there can be no other.**

**But this error is not confined to specialized scientists and materialists. It emphatically applies to dogmatic metaphysicians. Aristotle, Leibniz, Hegel, name whom you will, every one of them thinks his system is the true, all-encompassing, final account of the All, the Absolute. Not to speak of that compounded corruption of dogmatic metaphysics, theology. On the other hand, those who became**

**wise to the falsehood of the claims of dogmatic metaphysics, like Hume, confined all knowledge that we may have to perceptible things.**

**Yet poets have always lived in imaginative worlds of their own creations and thereby made it possible for us to break free of the dreariness and the misery of our world and experience real sympathies, passions, delights – imaginative in their substance but truly alive in our subjective domain.**

**Likewise philosophers, responding to our inborn “devotion to something afar from the sphere of our sorrow (Shelley), create universes of discourse, intrinsically coherent and whole, making it possible for us to live in intelligible worlds, confessedly tissue of dreams, but which, in the reality of our subjective being, give us a**

**world of spiritual values, moral and aesthetic, wherein we may truly live.**

**Let it be clear that I do not speak of generic ‘Philosophy’ as a universe of discourse, for there is no such thing as ‘Philosophy’ any more than there is ‘Poetry’ or ‘Painting’, but there are philosophies and poems and paintings. Separate individual philosophers have separate individual universes of discourse. I I enjoy living in the special world of Berkeley as I enjoy living in the special world of Spinoza or Schopenhauer.**

**I have lately read Spinoza’s early work, *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*. The fundamental concepts that constitute the universe of discourse in his mature work are all incipient there but the first part adducing proofs for the existence and the properties of God is as non-sensical as the geometrical proofs of**

**his great *Ethics*. For any adept reasoner working with pure ideas of reason can convincingly demonstrate whatever he may fancy. The gold of genuine philosophy is imaginative insight, the tinsel is deductive reasoning.**

**Over the centuries, of course, a number of technical terms and a number of assumptions or principles have become common property to philosophers, but these are no more of the essence of any philosophy than the technicalities of versification or of painting are of the essence of poetry or painting. When I speak of philosophy as universe of discourse I am speaking of the special universes of discourse of individual philosophers.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**April 2, 2020**

## WHITEHEAD REVISITED

### I

I have always seen Alfred North Whitehead as the profoundest twentieth-century philosopher. He came to the (writing of) philosophy by a round-about way. He began as a mathematician and passed by physics before he produced his philosophical works beginning with *Science and the Modern World* in 1926.

I have now ‘read’ (rather, listened to) Whitehead’s *The Concept of Nature: The Turner Lectures Delivered in Trinity College, November 1919*. O me! It was a lesson in humility. It confirms my conviction that the utmost wisdom we can reach is to confess and accept our ignorance.

**In the first lecture Whitehead draws a very important distinction between what he calls ‘homogeneous’ and ‘heterogeneous’ thinking about nature. I have to quote this important passage in full:**

**“We have to discuss the philosophy of natural science. Natural science is the science of nature. But —What is nature? Nature is that which we observe in perception through the senses. In this sense-perception we are aware of something which is not thought and which is self-contained for thought. This property of being self-contained for thought lies at the base of natural science. It means that nature can be thought of as a closed system whose mutual relations do not require the expression of the fact that they are thought about. Thus in a sense nature is independent of thought. By this statement no metaphysical pronouncement is intended. What I mean is that we can think about nature without**

**thinking about thought. I shall say that then we are thinking ‘homogeneously’ about nature. Of course it is possible to think of nature in conjunction with thought about the fact that nature is thought about. In such a case I shall say that we are thinking ‘heterogeneously’ about nature.”**

**This, in my opinion, nicely defines the scopes of science, on the one hand, and on the other hand, not philosophy as I see philosophy but anything akin to Kant’s transcendental system of which Whitehead’s own *Science and the Modern World* is an excellent example. For Kant, who is much wronged and much misunderstood by thinkers who should know better, agreeing with Socrates-Plato, assigned the whole of the natural world, as the world of phenomena, to science, and left to philosophy the world of ideas, though Kant’s mind on this point was not as clear as Plato’s.**

I will not comment any further on Whitehead’s *Concept of Nature* but I thought I found in it confirmation for what I have been saying about the nature and limits of scientific knowledge.

## II

Throughout my writings, Whitehead has always been prominent. In *Quest of Reality* (2013) Chapter VIII was devoted to Whitehead. In “Whitehead’s Real World” (included in *Metaphysical eality*, 2014) I argued that in his *magnum opus Process and Reality* (1929) he was still concerned with reality as the reality of the natural world, not with metaphysical reality. I now think that in saying that I have wronged Whitehead. By introducing the notions of ‘feeling’ and ‘experience’ in *Process and Reality* he transformed his cosmological account into a metaphysical ontology. If I could go back fifty years inn age I would make an in-depth study of Whitehead’s works. As it is, the least I can do is to try to make a renewed study of *Pro-*

*cess and Reality*. Whitehead's thinking on God and on Religion also calls for a deeper study but I can't dream of being able to do that (except within the bounds of the study of *Process and Reality*). I owe this revision of my thinking to an enlightening article on Whitehead by Professor Gary L. Gerstein in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

### III

I now go to what was my intention when I first started this essay. On the basis of the clear and radical separation of the spheres of science and philosophy demanded by Socrates-Plato, re-asserted by Kant, and supported by Whitehead's distinction between the homogeneous and heterogeneous thinking about nature, what are we to think of the nature of metaphysical thinking? It is, in my view, it is what I have been advocating in all my writings, most recently in "Philosophy as Universe of Discourse". Whether we will it or not, we, as human beings, cannot but live in a world of ideas of

**our own making. Our views of the world, scientific as well as philosophic, are imaginative visions formed out of ideas. In the case of scientific theory the vision must accord with objective observations, though these observations are shaped by ideas at a more fundamental level. The vision is constantly revised, or modified, or rehected accordingly. The philosophic visions are bot controlled by conformity with objective observations; they are wholly the progeny of the mind. They are more or less valuable in as much as they do or do not sarisfy our aspiration to make sense of the mysteries of being.**

#### **IV**

**From rhe haughtiest to the humblest, evert one of us human beings lives under the direction of conscious or half-conscious aims,d purposes, ideals, and values, harmonious or in-harmomious and conflicting. This is our boon and our bane.**

**Lately I have been reading Schopenhauer’s “On the Sufferings of the World”. For Schopenhauer all life is misery but the life of humans is far more miserable than that of the brutes for humans not only suffer the pains that the rest of the animals suffer but also anguish and grief and pains and tortures they inflict on each other. I need not expand on this. But then, as Milton has it, ““The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven..” As humans can live in the hell of vanity and hate and greed and vengeance they also can live in a spiritual world of amity and nobility and beauty. We are fated to suffer and die, but we can still live a worthy life if we live not in the bondage of false ideals and values but in the freedom of true ideals and values.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**April 13, 2020**



# RETHINKING WHITEHEAD

## A critique of Whitehead's metaphysical cosmology

### Prefatory

By way of preface, let me tell the story of this essay. I have always admired Whitehead and have always thought him the profoundest philosopher of the twentieth century. In *Quest of Reality* (2013) I devoted a chapter (VII) to Whitehead. In *Metaphysical Reality* ( 2014) I included a paper titled “Whitehead’s Real World” in which I maintained that Whitehead did not offer a metaphysical vision but a cosmology. On April 13, 2020,I posted to my blog an essay, “Whitehead Revisited”, incited by my

reading for the first time Whitehead's *Concept of Nature* (1919), which sent me to an article on Whitehead by Professor Gary L. Gerstein in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. I found myself puzzled. Had I wronged Whitehead when I said that his philosophy was not metaphysical? That sent me back to *Process and Reality* (1929). The following notes give my thoughts as I 'read' (more correctly, listened to) Whitehead's *magnum opus*.

There is such extensive fundamental agreement between Whitehead's thought and mine that it is perhaps opportune at this early point to obviate a likely misunderstanding. I do not hesitate to confess my indebtedness to earlier thinkers or my sources of inspiration. But in truth I only read Whitehead's main philosophical works when I had already fundamentally formed my philoso-

phy. The only book of Whitehead's that I read in my youth was *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (1919). I only read his other philosophical books in my sixties when I was finally preparing my first book, first published in 1998 when I was already past my seventieth birthday. Perhaps this explains why, despite the close affinity in thought, my terminology differs from and sometimes conflicts with that of Whitehead.

However, this essay is not a study of Whitehead's philosophy nor is it intended to comment on *Process and Reality*: it concentrates on Whitehead's stand on metaphysics as exemplified mainly in his treatment of Kant and of the subject of God. Hence it underlines my differences with Whitehead and muffles my fundamental agreement with and great admiration for the philosophy of organism.

**(Quotations are cited by Part, Chapter, and Section. All emphases within the quotations are in the original. I am using the digital version; my near-blindness denies me access to the print version.)**

## **INTRODUCTORY**

**Whitehead's *Process and Reality* is subtitled "An Essay in Cosmology". In this essay I will, with utmost diffidence, try to show that Whitehead, in his inspiringly insightful philosophy of organism, has inadvertently strayed into an unnatural hybrid metaphysical cosmology. Now, in the Preface Whitehead writes: "... how shallow, puny, and imperfect are efforts to sound the depths in the nature of things. In philosophical discussion, the merest hint of dogmatic certainty as to finality of statement is an exhibition of folly." That makes**

my venture doubly foolhardy. Moreover, to find fault with a philosophy I have always enthusiastically applauded is hardly a pleasant task. — The following are mainly notes I wrote down while ‘reading’ (rather listening to) the book, which I reproduce with minimum editing, begging the Reader’s forbearance for typos and for sloppy editing which is all that my near-blindness permits me. If I have any sense this must be the last thing I write.

Whitehead’s Preface is much more important than a preface usually is. Why does Whitehead insist that he is working on a cosmology? The attempt to answer this question will be the backbone of this essay.

Whitehead speaks of “the scheme of ideas, in terms of which the cosmology is to be framed” and further on asserts that “the true method of philosophical construction is to frame

**a scheme of ideas, the best that one can, and unflinchingly to explore the interpretation of experience in terms of that scheme ... all constructive thought, on the various special topics of scientific interest, is dominated by some such scheme, unacknowledged, but no less influential in guiding the imagination.” This completely agrees with what I have been advocating as the true nature of both philosophic and scientific thinking, with, however, a radical difference between the content of scientific thinking on the one hand and of philosophical thinking on the other hand. This is a crucial consideration that underlies this paper in its entirety. Science and philosophy sow different seeds and reap different crops. This was seen by Socrates-Plato and by Kant but was disregarded by Whitehead.**

**By disregarding the radical separation of science and philosophy Whitehead’s cosmology is transmuted into a would-be metaphysical vision, notwithstanding that Whitehead does not seem to be confronting the essen-**

tially metaphysical question of ultimate Reality (Being), except when he comes to speak of God, but fundamentally he is concerned with the actual world ('the nature of things'). That is why, for support, he goes to Plato in the *Timaeus*, not in the *Republic*.

The Preface leaves me with one gaping question: what seems to me as Whitehead's misconstruing of Kant. (This is dealt with at length hereafter.)

The list of nine "prevalent habits of thought", that Whitehead would repudiate may be commented on in a supplement to the essay. That may possibly make a good summation. (See Supplement.)

## PRELIMINARY NOTES

The first chapter of Part I reveals a fundamental difference between Whitehead's conception of philosophy and mine despite the pervasive affinity I have found between his thought and mine. I could only explain this by saying that there seems

to be one variation of philosophical thinking that I ignored, that is philosophical cosmology, and there is one variation that Whitehead did not acknowledge but was intuitively groping for, and that is poetic philosophy. Perhaos Plato at times strained towards Whitehead's amalgam of science and philosophy and came up with feeble gropings. That would be what I usually discount as Plato's theoretic ventures. But Plato soared to the summit of poetic philosophy which, by its very nature, cannot be given explicit expression but can only be intimated in myth and parable. — But a philosophical cosmology would, properly speaking, be no more than an imaginative cosmogony. (May the Reader forgive this chaotic note. Its confusedness, I hope, is remedied in what follows.)

To compensate for the divergence between Whitehead's understanding of philosophy and mine, I find deep satisfaction in the notion of duration, which is fundamental in my philosophy; in the notion of 'event'; in his

**special usages of ‘feeling’, ‘family’, ‘society’, ‘community’, ‘apetition’, ‘prehension’; in his emphasis on creativity, which is the all-in-all in my philosophy; and in the view that nature, the whole world, is a living organism. But I do not claim truth for all or any of my metaphysical views: I only say this is the only way I find the world intelligible.**

**Every original philosopher has his special language embodying his special universe of discourse. (See “Philosophy as Universe of Discourse”.) But Whitehead comes with a complete new language, with a complete new terminology. He aims at high precision (or rather ‘correctness’). But high precision comes at a high price. Whitehead knows that there can be no final definitive precision. Yet the mathematician in him impels him to go to the limit; he thus defeats his own purpose. All language is fluid and needs to be fluid. But when the reader cannot bring in his own variations and private nuances to interpret the text for himself, the**

**text fails to speak to him and he finds it obscure or meaningless.**

**I have always seen the Principle of Creativity as my special and original contribution to metaphysical thought. I held that all becoming is creativity. This is also crucial in Whitehead's philosophy of organism. That stands to reason. Anyone who finds inspiration in Plato will see the cosmos as a living organism continually giving birth to new life. So Whitehead asserts (at I.II.IV) that “‘becoming’ is a creative advance into novelty”. Further on (II.I.VII) he writes:**

**“But Locke, throughout his *Essay*, rightly insists that the chief ingredient in the notion of ‘substance’ is the notion of ‘power.’ The philosophy of organism holds that, t in order to understand ‘power,’ we must have a correct notion of how each individual actual entity contributes to the datum *from which* its successors arise and *to which* they must conform.”**

I am surprised to discover that much of *Process and Reality* does not interest me because it pertains to the cosmology and addresses what Whitehead considers relevant and necessary for his cosmology. I would never dream to say the same of *Adventures of Ideas* or of *Modes of Rgought* or of *Religion in the Making*.

I think scientists would be wise to absorb Whitehead's philosophy of organism but they would be hampered in their work if they tried to carry out their work within his 'scheme of ideas'. — Perhaps in "Whitehead's Real World" I was not far wrong.

To the practising scientist Whitehead's philosophical statements will be useless generalizations. To proceed with his empirical research the scientist has to forget the philosophical insight and work with dead abstractions. Kant is vindicated.

It's a pity that Whitehead, despite his great insights, has brought upon himself the relative neglect that

**has been his lot. He could satisfy neither the scientists nor the metaphysicians. In addition, he shared Kant's seduction: he wanted his philosophy to justify his Christian heritage.**

## KANT

**Whitehead tries to give a judicious account of Kant's transcendental system but misconstrues Kant's purpose.**

**“We have now come to Kant, the great philosopher who first, fully and explicitly, introduced into philosophy the conception of an act of experience as a constructive functioning, transforming subjectivity into objectivity, or objectivity into subjectivity; the order is immaterial in comparison with the general idea. We find the first beginnings of the notion in Locke and in Hume. Indeed, in Locke, the process is conceived in its correct order, at least in the view of the philosophy**

**of organism. But the whole notion is only vaguely and inadequately conceived. The full sweep of the notion is due to Kant. The second half of the modern period of philosophical thought is to be dated from Hume and Kant. In it the development of cosmology has been hampered by the stress laid upon one, or other, of three misconceptions:” (II.VI.V)**

**In my opinion, Whitehead’s approbation as well as his censure of Kant is misplaced. He ascribes to Kant more than Kant would acknowledge when he says that Kant “introduced into philosophy the conception of an act of experience” and he unjustly blames Kant for hampering the “development of cosmology” when cosmology, as such, lay outside the scope of Kant’s transcendental project.**

**“The contrary doctrine, that there is a ‘togetherness’ not derivative from experiential togetherness, leads to the disjunction of**

**the components of subjective experience from the community of the external world. This disjunction creates the insurmountable difficulty for epistemology. For intuitive judgment is concerned with togetherness in experience, and there is no bridge between togetherness in experience, and togetherness of the non-experiential sort.” (II.VII.I)**

This passage is highly revealing. Whitehead is blaming Kant for not aiming at what he (Whitehead) was aiming at; Kant was not constructing a cosmology and according to his distribution of roles there is no place for such a cosmology in his project. Kant assigned himself a clearly defined task. Hume had shown that scientific reasoning is at base irrational; it has at its foundation the fiction of causality. Kant was in the first place a scientist and knew that science was doing valuable work. His aim was to rescue science. His solution was good and valid. Reason is not found in nature but is infused into nature by the

**mind as Plato knew. Whitehead was building a philosophical-scientific cosmology, a creation no one else envisaged, neither Descartes nor even Leibniz. Kant showed that scientists – under the creed of objectivity – are limited to the investigation of lifeless phenomena. Whitehead showed that scientists are wrong in thinking their objective knowledge gives a true vision of the world. That is what Whitehead castigates as the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. But Whitehead's scheme, daring and inspiring as it is, breaks down and cannot but break down before reaching its final goal. For when Whitehead speaks of God he can neither claim empirical verity nor rational probity. The higher reaches of his cosmology are an imaginative vision that has no more claim to truth than Leibniz *Monadology* or Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Idea* or my *Creative Eternity*.”**

**“The difficulties of all schools of modern philosophy lie in the fact that, having accepted the subjec-**

tivist principle, \* \* they continue to use philosophical categories derived from another point of view. These categories are not wrong, but they deal with abstractions unsuitable for metaphysical use. It is for this reason that the notions of the ‘extensive continuum’ and of ‘presentational immediacy’ require such careful discussion from every point of view. The notions of the ‘green leaf’ and of the ‘round ball’ are at the base of traditional metaphysics. They have generated two misconceptions: *one* is the concept of vacuous actuality, void of subjective experience; and the *other* is the concept of quality inherent in substance. In their proper character, as high abstractions, both of these notions are of the utmost pragmatic use. In fact, language has been formed chiefly to express such concepts. It is for this reason that language, in its ordinary usages, penetrates but a short distance

**into the principles of metaphysics. Finally, the reformed subjectivist principle must be repeated: that apart from the experiences of subjects there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness.”**

**(II.VII.V)**

**The ‘extensive continuum’ is the notion of the World as a living organism; it is the metaphysical Whole. Empirical science has no use for this notion. Bertrand Russell could not understand Wittgenstein’s assertion that you cannot make a statement about the World. Russell was thinking as an Empiricist and Wittgenstein knew that a statement about the All is metaphysical, and while his philosophy precluded metaphysics, his metaphysical turn of mind forced it on him. (See Russell, *My Philosophical Development*, p,86.)**

**What Whitehead finds wrong with the notions of the ‘green leaf’ and the ‘round ball’ is that they are taken to be actual objects. In the philosophy of organism the green leaf is an event, the round ball is an event,**

**parts of the ever flowing, ever renewed world. This is a proper metaphysical insight and for a sane enlightened outlook on life and the world this insight has to be absorbed. But metaphysical insights are not workable in science; science, equally with mathematics, has to work in abstractions (concepts created by the mind); and it is not a fault in language that it is composed of such abstractions for it could not otherwise be an instrument of communication.**

**The last sentence in the above quotation sums the Idealist position. But this view, this insight, cannot be elicited from within the scientific mode of thinking. Again, Kant is right and Whitehead is unjustified in thinking that Kant erred.**

**At II.IX.II Whitehead writes:**  
**“This difficulty is the point of Kant's ‘transcendental’ criticism. He adopted a subjectivist position, so that the temporal world was merely experienced. But according to his form of the subjec-**

tivist doctrine, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, no element in the temporal world could itself be an experient. His temporal world, as in that *Critique*, was in its essence dead, phantasmal, phenomenal. Kant was a mathematical physicist, and his cosmological solution was sufficient for the abstractions to which mathematical physics is confined.”

This is not fair to Kant who did not aim at metaphysics, which his transcendental system precluded, and had he intended a cosmology it would have been such as NASA would offer. Kant’s purpose was precisely prescribed: he wanted to delineate the proper scope of empirical science. His limiting of scientific knowledge to phenomena was not a diminution of science, for he (rightly) held that knowledge of phenomena is all the objective knowledge we can have. Accordingly, the ‘temporal world’ can only be known to us as experienced. The only experient a human being knows is his own inner being. To

**think of nature as experiencing** ('feeling' in Whitehead's sense of the term) is to trespass from the sphere of objective knowledge into the sphere of imagination. That is exactly what Whitehead does. He gives us a beautiful inspiring vision of the world as a living organism, a vision which can neither be empirically verified as science nor deductively demonstrated as mathematics but can only stand as poetic imaginative vision intimating ineffable mystic insight into the only reality we know, our own inner reality.

Whitehead is right in defining the limitations of Kant's system but he is mistaken in taking these limitations as failings. They are the limitations Kant set for himself. Hume had shown the irrationality of science in having at its basis the fiction of causality. Kant was in the first place a scientist. His aim was to save science. He rightly shows that reason is instilled into scientific statements by the mind. Kant shows that science can only deal and is required only to deal

**with lifeless phenomena. Scientists only go wrong when they think that their picture of the world reveals the reality of the world. Kant rightly limited pure reason to the examination of ideas in the mind. But he erred when he, instead of allowing the mind to create imaginative visions in the manner of Plato, and being at the same time loth to give up his religious convictions, sought to derive these convictions from Practical Reason.**

**But Whitehead does not resort to subterfuge in the manner of Kant but presents his thoughts on God as reasoned conclusions integrally worked into his comprehensive philosophy.**

#### **ADDITIONAL MARGINAL NOTES**

**Whitehead was prone to overlook the insight – to which he himself gives emphatic expression – that there is no finality in philosophy. The philosophy of organism is enlightening and highly valuable but in the end is one other personal vision.**

**Whitehead gives much space to the discussion of probability. This whole discussion lies, in my opinion, outside the sphere of philosophy proper. The space Whitehead gives to the discussion of probability shows that he aims at a complete, comprehensive system, which is a chimera. It is akin to Leibniz' dream of a ‘universal characteristic’, the illusion underlying the idea of logical symbolism. No knowledge is complete or definitive. The same can be said about the discussion of inductive judgments which properly belongs to the methodology of science. .**

**Section II.IX.V (which, in my opinion, clearly defines Whitehead's project and reveals where he goes wrong and how and why he misconstrues Kant) begins thus:**

**“We ask the metaphysical question, What is there in the nature**

**of things, whereby an inductive inference, or a judgment of general truth, can be significantly termed ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’?”**

**In the first place, I think, Whitehead’s conception of ‘the metaphysical question’ is mistaken as I will try to show. The ‘nature of things’ – even in the physicists’ emaciated sense – can never be definitely known to the human mind, most decidedly not by inductive inference. Induction is the valued handmaid of science but it can never lead to finality or certainty.**

**Whitehead’s expectation that such “an inductive inference, or a judgment of general truth, can be significantly termed ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’” is carefully guarded as is to be expected from such a great thinker, but it is basically flawed. To my mind, ‘the metaphysical question’ as framed by Whitehead is not metaphysical. ‘Metaphysics’ defined as Whitehead defines it stops short of the philosophic aspiration; it produces the semblance of a scientific cos-**

mology that can satisfy neither the scientist nor the philosopher.

The lifeblood of science is abstraction. Bergson equally with Whitehead was wrong in thinking that science erred in working with abstractions. Not science but scientists err in thinking their abstractions, necessary for their work, are the stuff of the world. Why don't we blame the mathematicians for their ultra-abstract abstractions? The error of mathematicians is opposite to that of the physicists: they think their abstractions are inherent in things. In truth there are no numbers, no circles, no squares in nature; that is the source of the incommensurate.

We see all of this clearly when Whitehead comes to speak of God. What he says of God can by no means fall within the province of science. It belongs to metaphysics proper. But as metaphysics it can only be an imaginative vision in the same class as Leibniz' *Monadology* or Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Idea*. When Whitehead speaks of God he aspires

**to true metaphysics but takes the wrong way to his goal.**

## **GOD**

**At III.III.II Whitehead says:**

**“Apart from the intervention of God, there could be nothing new in the world, and no order in the world. The course of creation would be a dead level of ineffectiveness, with all balance and intensity progressively excluded by the cross currents of incompatibility.”**

**In my philosophy I simply say that all novelty, all originality, absolutely all becoming, is in no way intelligible unless we see creativity as an original dimension of ultimate Reality (Being). That is the gist of the Principle of Creativity in my metaphysics, the sum and substance of my philosophy of Creative Eternity. I prefer not to use the term ‘God’ because over the millennia it has been burdened with contradictory and often absurd meanings.**

Whitehead of course has the right to use whatever terminology he chooses. But if what he says here is affirmed within his ‘scientific cosmology’ it can be no more than a hypothesis and cannot claim to be anything other a ‘likely tale’ (to borrow Plato’s happy phrase) that can never be ascertained. If it is to be accounted a philosophical insight, then it has to be seen as a poetic, imaginative vision, in which case the whole of his cosmology would be in a class with Plato’s *Timaeus*, for the *Timaeus* was Plato’s venture into cosmogony that was frankly presented as a myth. Plato’s profoundest metaphysical insights are to be found in his myths, in his poetic flights of the imagination, and in the unspeakable mystery of the Form of the Good. (When I speak of Plato’s myths I do not mean his well-known eschatological myths but what scholars take to be doctrines.)

Whitehead speaks of ‘the aim of God’. This suggests a separateness of God from the world which gives God an actuality opposed to the actuality

**of the world. To me God does not have being over and above the being of the world but is the unity, the wholeness of the the World as the mind is not apart from the body or over and above the body but is the Totality, the Integrity that renders the body a living, thinking, creative organism.)**

**“The notion of nature as an organic extensive community omits the equally essential point of view that nature is never complete. It is always passing beyond itself. This is the creative advance of nature. Here we come to the problem of time. The immediately relevant point to notice is that time and space are characteristics of nature which presuppose the scheme of extension. But extension does not in itself determine the special facts which are true respecting physical time and physical space.” (IV.I.IV)**

**This exemplifies Whitehead’s vacillation between science and philosophy and the unnecessary separa-**

tions he introduces and the difficulties he creates for himself thereby. I see “the creative advance of nature” as inherent in the character of “nature as an organic extensive community”. The World as a living organism simply lives, as a plant’s flowering is simply its life. Time and space are conceptual creations of the human mind, useful fictions of no relevance to metaphysics proper.

We may say that Whitehead’s cosmology is an impure metaphysics arising out of an illicit mixture of philosophy and science. It is a hybrid, an oddity that, despite its undeniable merits, defeats itself.

I am not certain that I can understand Whitehead’s thinking about God. I think he unconsciously brings in too much of Christian theology into his philosophy. And at certain points where his position is, let us say, metaphysical, I find that I have to differ with him. I will quote at length a crucial passage from his last summing up in Part V of *Process and Reality* and rather than breaking the

unity of Whitehead's statement I will comment on numbered phrases below:

"Thus, when we make a distinction of reason, and consider God in the abstraction of a primordial actuality<sup>1</sup>, we must ascribe to him neither fulness of feeling, nor consciousness<sup>2</sup>. He is the unconditioned actuality of conceptual feeling at the base of things; so that, by reason of this primordial actuality<sup>3</sup>, there is an order in the relevance of eternal objects to the process of creation<sup>4</sup>. His unity of conceptual operations is a free creative act, untrammelled by reference to any particular course of things<sup>5</sup>. It is deflected neither by love, nor by hatred, for what in fact comes to pass<sup>6</sup>. The *particularities* of the actual world presuppose *it*; while *it* merely presupposes the *general* metaphysical character of creative advance, of which it is the primordial exemplification. The primordial nature of God is the acquirement by creativity of a primordial character<sup>7</sup>.

1. A primordial actuality' corresponds to an original dimension of ultimate Reality in my philosophy; to call it an actuality constitutes for me a contradiction in terms; and I do not call it an abstraction but a creative notion. But all of these points may be only differences in terminology.
2. Here I feel lost. Without feeling and without consciousness God cannot be God.
3. I do not ascribe activity or creativity to God but say that God is the Principle of Creativity.
4. To me, the 'eternal objects' (Plato's forms) do not have or constitute a plane of being of their own. They are the children of conceptual thinking, of finite minds. I admit no separation in ultimate Reality.

- 5. Again I see this as obfuscating the pure idea of God as pure intelligent creativity. God, metaphysically conceived, is not a creator but is the eternal Act, pure primordial creativity.**
- 6. Love and hatred are only relevant to finite intelligences. Whitehead's statement does not conflict with this.**
- 7. Again this unnecessarily fragments what is one whole. Creativity has no need for acquiring a primordial character; creativity is the primordial character of ultimate Reality. That is why I insist that Creative Eternity is not an entity, not a being over and above the All, but is the intelligence, the intelligent creativity of the All.**

**“The consequent nature of God is his judgment on the world. He saves the world as it passes into the**

**immediacy of his own life. It is the judgment of a tenderness which loses nothing that can be saved. It is also the judgment of a wisdom which uses what in the temporal world is mere wreckage.” (V.II.IV)**

This, as imaginative metaphor, is fine. But in the context of a ‘metaphysical cosmology’ can neither be verified empirically nor demonstrated deductively; and since it is not frankly offered as a poetic expression of an imaginative vision it invites us to dub it Whitehead’s theology.

**“It is as true to say that God is permanent and the World fluent, as that the World is permanent and God is fluent.”**

**“It is as true to say that God is one and the World many, as that the World is one and God many.”**

**“It is as true to say that, in comparison with the World, God is actual eminently, as that, in comparison with God, the World is actual eminently.”**

**“It is as true to say that the World is immanent in God, as that God is immanent in the World.”**

**“It is as true to say that God transcends the World, as that the World transcends God.”**

**“It is as true to say that God creates the World, as that the World creates God.”**

**“God and the World are the contrasted opposites in terms of which Creativity achieves its supreme task of transforming disjoined multiplicity, with its diversities in opposition, into concrecent unity, with its diversities in contrast. ...” (V.X.V)**

**This is Bacchic frenzy in which all distinctions and all identities are obliterated. We gain nothing by such unbridled expressions. For coherence of vision I need to conceive the Whole opposed to the Wholeness as the Principle of Intelligence and Creativity that is actualized in the Whole but cannot itself be conceived as actuality.**

**“In God's nature, permanence is primordial and flux is derivative from the World: in the World's nature, flux is primordial and permanence is derivative from God. Also the World's nature is a primordial datum for God; and God's nature is a primordial datum for the World. Creation achieves the reconciliation of permanence and flux when it has reached its final term which is everlastingness —the Apotheosis of the World.**

**“ Opposed elements stand to each other in mutual requirement. In their unity, they inhibit or contrast. God and the World stand to each other in this opposed requirement. God is the infinite ground of all mentality, the unity of vision seeking physical multiplicity. The World is the multiplicity ...” (V.X.VII. The digital version comes to**

an abrupt close mid-sentence.)

What makes me uneasy about such wide-sway statements is that they have a whiff of finality as if we were given to attain positive knowledge. I will not expand; I cannot add to what I have already said in earlier comments.

### CONCLUDING NOTES

I think that Whitehead's difficulties stem from his opposing God to the World, his taking God to be on par with the World. To me God and the World are not opposed but are the *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* of Spinoza that are not two but one; neither properly understood is conceivable apart from the other. Spinoza was right in asserting the unity of Substance, his fault was that his unquestioning acceptance of the Rationalist superstition of causal necessity rules out creativity and all originality.

There is only one sense in which I may permit myself to speak of God as a Person. As pure intelligence and

**pure creativity It (God) is not in the world and is not other than the world but is the intelligence of the All, the self-consciousness of the All — not the self-consciousness of Itself, which would split it into subject and object, but rather it is the Whole self-conscious not of itself but of its Wholeness. In this sense and only in this sense I may speak of God as a Person.**

I still maintain that Whitehead's next, most inspiring, phol books are *Science and the Modern World* (1926), *Religion in the Making* (1926), *Adventures of Ideas* (1933), *Modes of Thought* (1938). The value of *Process and Reality* (1929) resides in a handful of insightful notions. The rest lies outside the prop[er sphere of philosophy. It is not for me to speak of its value in the spheres of mathematics and logic but I make bold to say that its contribution to metaphysics proper equally with its contribution to physical science is negative. I fancy that Whitehead in the end came to see the faults of *Process and Reality*. I

find *Adventures of Ideas* (1933) and *Modes of Thought* (1938) most profound, most inspiring, and most pleasant to read.

## SUPPLEMENT

In the Preface Whitehead writes:

“These lectures will be best understood by noting the following list of prevalent habits of thought, which are repudiated, in so far as concerns their influence on philosophy:

- (i) The distrust of speculative philosophy.
- (ii) The trust in language as an adequate expression of propositions.
- (iii) The mode of philosophical thought which implies, and is implied by, the faculty-psychology.
- (iv) The subject-predicate form of expression.

**(v) The sensationalist doctrine of perception.**

**( vi) The doctrine of vacuous actuality.**

**(vii) The Kantian doctrine of the objective world as a theoretical construct**

**from purely subjective experience.**

**(viii) Arbitrary deductions in *ex absurdo* arguments.**

**(ix) Belief that logical inconsistencies can indicate anything else than  
some antecedent errors.”**

**I will try to say a word about some of these points.**

**(i) With Plato and with Kant I limit the scope of ‘speculative philosophy’ to the examination by the mind, within the mind, of pure ideas of the mind. This does not give us knowledge but gives us intelligible imaginative visions: this is all the understanding we may ever have.**

- (ii) **Language, the shadow of thought, was formed to be in the service of practice. Its limitations are dictated by its purpose. No formulation of thought or language can be definitive or certain but in myth, parable, and metaphor we give expression to our imaginative visions intimating insights into our inner reality.**
- (iii) **No comment.**
- (iv) **This is a feature of language. What I have said under (ii) suffices.**
- (v) **No comment.**
- (vi) **No comment.**
- (vii) **This expresses Whitehead's misconstruction of Kant's position which I have dealt with sufficiently above.**
- (viii) **This refers to dogmatic metaphysics. Whitehead verges on falling into the same fault.**

(ix) **We can never aspire to finality or certainty nor to completeness of comprehensive vision. Hence any thinker who dare think for himself cannot be free of inconsistencies. Indeed, complete consistence in a philosopher's statements must be the mark of shallowness. But there is a world of difference between the inconsistence of originality and the inconsistence of mediocrity which is unpardonable. Whitehead is liable to the opposite fault: he strains after the mirage of comprehensiveness and perfect precision.**

**D. R. Khashaba**  
**April 24, 2020**

## **ALL IS VANITY**

**Poets, the best prophets and profoundest seers, give us conflicting visions of life and of the world.**

**Novelists, not the tellers of silly tales but those who probe the human soul, give us divergent portrayals of life and the world that have nothing in common save when they depict the misery and futility of life.**

**Philosophers demolish one another's painstakingly erected edifices, tenets and doctrines.**

**Our worthy politicians and economists with their armies of scientists and technologists have landed us in us a world where millions die of famine and disease and where even with-**

**in the reputedly more fortunate countries people waste the substance of life striving to outdo their neighbours and grabbing what they have been conditioned to desire but have no leisure to enjoy.**

**Our proud science and AI and technology enable us to detect a planet in a distant galaxy. But what do they tell us about the values of life and the value of life?**

**I could go on and on and on and yet say nothing you do not already know.**

**I find one thing certain: I know nothing.**

**I live, I strive, I think. And what does it all come to in the end? Dust comes to dust.**

**One refuge I have. To withdraw within myself, live at peace with myself, live at peace with all humans, at**

**peace with all life, at peace with the  
whole of nature.**

**That is the wisdom Gautama ar-  
rived at: he is rightfully titled the  
Buddha, the enlightened.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**May 1, 2020**

## **FUTILITY OF ARGUMENT**

**Any meaningful statement is a personal testimony.**

**To guard a statement so as to forestall all thinkable objections and all possible misunderstandings empties the statement of all content, of all meaning.**

**I have tried to ‘read’ Collingwood’s *Religion and Philosophy*. It made me dizzy.**

**Any formulation of words or thought must be open to falsification unless it be a purely haphazard stream of letters in which case it would contain neither word nor thought.**

**We should therefore read works of philosophy as we read poetry as expressing the philosopher's or poet's state of mind.**

**I was on the point of falling into the error I am decrying. I tried to qualify the statement in the preceding paragraph to say where it applies and where it doesn't.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**May 3, 2020**

## WHAT IS TRUTH?

I have been ‘reading’ some writings of Bertrand Russell on Logic and Mathematics (Part IV of the wonderful digital *Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*) and was strongly tempted by the crazy idea of writing some remarks particularly on the Prefaces and the Introduction to *Principia Mathematica*. I am mulling the idea, trying to decide whether it is at all feasible in view of my visual and other disabilities. Let me assure the Reader that if I yield to the temptation it will be in full awareness of my total ignorance and absence of qualification for approaching the substance of Russell’s and Whitehead’s

**majestic work. Let this cryptic statement suffice for the moment.**

**Now to my present purpose. Part IV of the *Basic Writings* ends with two papers on Dewey, in the second of which Russell somewhere writes:**

**“From the strictly philosophical point of view, the chief importance of Dewey’s work lies in his criticism of the traditional notion of ‘truth’, which is embodied in the theory that he calls ‘instrumentalism’. Truth, as conceived by most professional philosophers, is static and final, perfect and eternal; ...The perfect model of truth is the multiplication table, which is precise and certain and free from all temporal dross.”**

**The word ‘truth’ is a veritable chameleon. It has radically different meanings in different contexts. There is an exalted, sublime sense of the word, the Truth of the poet and the**

mystic; this has nothing to do with, and no place in, epistemology or science or mathematics. I adamantly maintain that, otherwise than in that special exalted sense, truth has nothing to do with metaphysical philosophy, nothing to do with the seminal parts of Plato's *Symposium* or *Phaedo* or *Republic* VI and VII. If I ever write the paper I spoke of in the opening lines above I will show how narrowly confined Russell makes all empirical knowledge based on its sole proper method, induction. Russell further reveals mathematics to have at its foundation indefinable elements. These in my philosophy are seen as creative notions like the definitions and axioms of geometry or of Spinoza, and these creative, irreducible notions, account for the whole of our knowledge and understanding. But I am straying away from my immediate purpose. My immediate tar-

**get is the last sentence in the lines quoted above: “The perfect model of truth is the multiplication table, which is precise and certain and free from all temporal dross.”**

**Is the multiplication table truly such? In my opinion, the multiplication table is just another ingenious tool, practically useful but wholly arbitrary. Years ago I wrote a short paper, “Why  $2+1=3$  Is Nonsense”, in which I said that  $2+1=3$  is true only as meaning that 3 is the number following 2 in the number series, but  $2 \text{ sheep} + 1 \text{ sheep} = 3 \text{ sheep}$  is nonsense because the three sheep are not three of any definable unit.**

**I get now to the multiplication table. In what sense is “2 times 3 is six” true? Only in the sense that it is required by our closed arbitrary arithmetical number system. Suppose that, instead of our decimal**

**number system we had a number system having five as its base. The number series would go something like this: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 51, 52, 53, 54, 6, 61, 62, 63 ... and so on. Two times three in this system would be 51 and 3 times 4 would be 62. These results would be correct within our closed system but would not be true in any other sense and when applied to actual objects would have the same defects as our present system.**

**Before closing this paper let me give leeway to fancy. We could equally well have a number system with base 20 or 15. We do actually have, in parts of the world and for certain commodities, a number series based on 12, where goods are bought and sold by the dozen. That the prevalent number series is decimal is purely accidental stemming from the fact that we happen to have ten fingers, just as we have a seven-day week because**

**some ancient people (probably the Babylonians) knew seven ‘planets’ (including the Sun and the Moon but not including the Earth). Nobody will say that there are weeks in nature!**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**May 5, 2020**

## MATHEMATICAL ABSURDITIES

After posting “What is Truth?”, reading further in *Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, I came across the following statement in Russell’s treatment of St Thomas Aquinas:

“Or take again the arguments professing to prove the existence of God. All of these, except the one from teleology in lifeless things, depend upon the supposed impossibility of a series having no first term. Every mathematician knows that there is no such impossibility; the series of negative integers ending with minus one is an instance to the contrary.”

I am not of course coming to the defence of Aquinas's argument. But Russell's statement at the close of the quotation above seems to me to illustrate how minds of the highest standards of intelligence and learning can be deluded by absurdities. If I remember correctly, it was Russell himself who somewhere said that only a man of great learning can commit grave absurdities.

Now to the falsity of Russell's statement about "the series of negative integers ending with minus one". Granting that the series goes on to infinity, I maintain that that infinity, like the parent notion of infinity, is a fiction created by the human mind. It is contrary to reason to think of an actual infinity, for it is of the very nature of the actual to be finite. The infinite is as fictional as the zero. There can be no actual zero. I think that Plato did away with that error in the *Sophist*. But to mathematicians the zero and the infinite are important and their importance makes them 'real'! Moreover, who decreed that

**“the series of negative integers (ends) with minus one”? To my mind the series begins with minus one. How could it end without having begun? Russell’s contention therefore does not refute Aquinas’s argument.**

**What we can say against Aquinas and Aristotle is that the notions of beginning and end are relative concepts applicable only to our actual world of limited existents. And since theologians have to admit that God has no begining they cannot reasonably maintain the impossibility of a being without a beginning. In truth, of absolute being, of the World as a whole, we can say nothing. Wittgenstein is vindicated. We cannot make any meaningful statement about the World — an insightful position of Wittgenstein’s that Russell could not understand.**

**D. R. Khashaba**  
**May 6, 2020**

## PHILOSOPHY AND VIRTUE

I find the chapter “Philosophy and Politics” in *Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell* very disturbing. It makes for much confusion. I have no intention of making any lengthy comment. Writing anything has become a real torment for me. But on certain particular points I find it necessary to say a word.

Early in the paper Russell writes:

“The word ‘philosophy’ is one of which the meaning is by no means fixed. ... Philosophy, as pursued in the universities of the Western democratic world, is, at least in intention, part of the pursuit of knowledge, aiming at the same kind of detachment as is

**sought in science ... Many teachers of philosophy would repudiate, not only the intention to influence their pupils' politics, but also the view that philosophy should inculcate virtue. This, they would say, has as little to do with the philosopher as with the physicist or the chemist.**

**Knowledge, they would say, should be the sole purpose of university teaching; virtue should be left to parents, schoolmasters, and Churches."**

Russell says he has much sympathy with this view of philosophy. But this is hardly consistent with Russell's own practice. In fact, at the university and in his technical writings Russell was practicing that sterilized kind of philosophy, but what are we to say of his writings and lectures on moral, social, political subjects? In practice Russell made a complete separation between these two spheres of his own activity.

**For myself I would say that most of what passes for philosophy today in the UK and the USA is a branch of science and has nothing to do with philosophy; it should not even be called ‘Analytic Philosophy’ but simply ‘Analytics’ or something like that.**

**I maintain that only a whole – a metaphysical whole, an ideal whole, an intelligible whole – is meaningful. That is the Platonic Form in the true sense. Such a whole has self-evidence since its meaning, its meaningfulness, is its essence. When Analytists objectify a whole – sacrificing its subjective essence on the altar of objectivity – it can be broken up and separated into parts endlessly. That is the beginning and end of Analytics. Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* knew or at least sensed that and saw clearly the vacuity of Russell’s Theory of Types and of all Logic but later lost his way in the**

mazes of *Philosophical Investigations* trying to fixate the meaning of words that are by their nature liquid and must remain liquid. Incidentally, I find that Chomsky whose great merit is his insight into the unbreakable wholeness of Language, goes on to lose himself in refining grammatical structures in search of an unattainable final precision.

Further on in the paper Russell lampoons Plato. Here I find another source of confusion. I do not intend to defend Plato. Plato was a man born into a particular age, a particular society, and a particular class. His views on social and political matters could all be wrong. That in no way detracts from his unequalled contributions to philosophical thinking.

Russell lumps Plato with Hegel. These two are poles apart. To put it in a few words: Plato's philosophy is

**the antithesis of system.Hegel is all  
system. I will say no more here.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**May 7, 2020**

## RISSELL AND DEWEY

I have been ‘reading’ the finely produced volume of *BASIC WRITINGS OF BERTRAND RUSSELL* and have made a number of remarks on various points. Yesterday I read the last part of the Writings and thought I could turn to other things. But something at the back of my mind kept nagging me. Russell has very strong antipathies. Among others, Bergson and Dewey receive harsh treatment from him. I think I have said something concerning Bergson in my earkier notes.

Of Russell’s criticism of Dewe’s Instrumentalism I did not at first feel I had anything to say. First because all I have read of Dewey was, many

years ago, *Reconstruction of Philosophy* which did not impress me much. For that reason I could not speak of Dewey's Instrumentalism which, moreover I was inclined to dismiss as a version of Pragmatism. I have never been so much dismayed by a book as by William James;s *Pragmatism* when I read it some seven decades ago.

But a passing remark of Russell's triggered a chain of thought in my mind which made me think that Russell may have as grossly misunderstood and misrepresented Dewey as he has misunderstood and misrepresented Plato and Kant and Bergson.

At one point (p.640) Russell says: "...common sense, which is our starting-point, is already infected with theory". In saying this, does he not concede, at least in part, what he always found wrong in Kant? But Kant does not simply say that the 'facts' of

**‘common sense’ are merely ‘infected’ with theory but that they are bereft of all meaning in the absence of the theoretical infusion brought about by the ‘concepts of the understanding’.**

**If that is so, does it not mean that all our ‘facts’, all our ‘factual knowledge’, naïve or scientific, is interpretation in terms of a theoretical perspective? And might it not be that that is the sound core of Dewey’s Instrumentalism, namely, yjat all our ‘objective knowledge’, being essentially interpretation, is relative to our existential circumstances? I am not saying it is; I am only sayimg that Russell is possibly unfair in dismissing Dewey’s position on the ground of a mistaken reading.**

**In the series of notes I wrote while reading Russell’s writings I was on the whole severely critical. But this only shows one side of my ambivalent**

**attitude towards Russell. Russell's technical writings are of no interest to me. They may be of high importance and utility in their respective fields but I think that, at any rate, his analytic work they is basucally flawed. But I greatly admire Russell's general essays on moral, social, and political subjects. They are a pleasure to read and are always thoughtful and thought-provoking.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**Nay 10, 2020**

## **SCIENCE AND RELIGION**

**Einstein was an instance of that regrettably rare phenomenon, a prominent scientist who can think clearly outside the sphere of equations and empirical data. I have just ‘read’ a valuable paper by Einstein on “Science and Religion”. I do not intend to comment on the wise things Einstein says on the subject: the paper is there for all to read.\* I have only two marginal remarks to make.**

**The first sentence in Einstein’s paper reads: “During the last century, and part of the one before, it was widely held that there was an unrecconcilable conflict between knowledge**

**and belief.” I think both the word ‘knowledge’ and the word ‘belief’ are trouble-makers. It is obvious that in this context they stand for ‘science’ and ;religion’ respectively. The identification of ‘knowledge’ with ‘science’ and the consequent restriction of knowledge to scientific knowledge is the source of much error and confusion. In my writings I cede the term ‘knowledge’ to science but I oppose that to ‘understanding’ which I accord to philosophy. This is unsatisfactory and is constantly giving me trouble and exposing me to being misunderstood. I wish we could find a term meaning specifically ‘scientific knowledge’as only one kind and one part of all knowledge.**

**My second remark concerns the term ‘belief’ or ‘religion’. Again I think that the use of either of these two words makes for much error and confusion. In my view, the values and ideals that give meaning and value to human life and that constitute our spiritual life belong to the domain of philosophy. It would save us much**

**unnecessary confusion to restrict the term ‘religion’ to the historical systems of belief and ritual and the extant institutionalized religions with all their positive and negative ingredients. The Judaic Scriptures, the New Testament, the Quran, the Hellenic Myths, the Vedas are all equally part of my cultural heritage. But what I share with and what unites me to an enlightened Jew, an enlightened Muslim, an enlightened Hindu is a common philosophy of life, common humane values and ideals.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**May 11, 2020**

\*<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/31f2/544eb7d14046b32ddf82dc16e751e624cba0.pdf>

## **ETHICS AND REASONING**

## **RAMBLING REFLECTIONS**

**Aristotle's reasoning, particularly as exemplified in his Ethics, is clear, correct, banal and at the same time wrong, except for a sprinkling of valuable insights. Actually, Aristotle in his reasoning does no more than clarify and set in order common usages of language. In all of this he is the antithesis to Plato who is, at his best, imaginative and oracular, allusive and elusive. In Plato, it is the dross that is astutely reasoned.**

**For Kant the only absolutely good thing is a good will — and what**

**is the good will? It sounds axiomatic to say that it is the will to do good. Hence we would not go wrong if we equate Kant's good will with Christian love. This takes me back to the first spark of my metaphysical thinking, when I was in my early teens, that ultimate Reality is Will and Will being essentially purposive, is Love: accordingly I found that ultimate Reality must be intelligent and good. — Later I saw that I have no justification for saying that this is true of the actual world, that this is a vision of Reality, a representation under which I can see the World as meaningful and intelligible/ but that I have no justification for saying that this is true of the actual world. Of everything outside my mind I can see no escape from the necessity of avowing our ignorance. It is enough for me that within myself – within my mind that is 'its own place' – I can live in a**

**meaningful, intelligible world of my mind's own creation.**

**Kant introduces unnecessary complications and errors in his moral philosophy by his insistence on subjecting everything to, and justifying everything by, reasoning. Philosophers have everything to gain in recognizing the narrowness of the proper scope and function of reasoning. The function of reasoning is to elucidate and to clarify, never to contribute positively to the substance or content of human understanding, which is the function of creative intelligence. In saying this I may be inviting terminological turmoil. I do not insist on my special terminology but there are distinctions that it is necessary to observe, I would say that intelligence has two forms or powers: Creative intelligence is the imagination that gives us poetry and art and genuine metaphysics exemplified by what is best in**

**Plato. These alone give us understanding. Critical intelligence is reasoning in the narrower sense I give it.**

**We go back to Kant. Kant formulates his Categorical Imperative thus: “*Act only on that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.*” This breeds trouble since in an imperfect world there can be no maxim completely exempt from exception. In an imperfect world values and ideals can and do clash. Witness the interminable squabbles about abortion. Kant gives the following example along with others:**

**“A man reduced to despair by a series of misfortunes feels wearied of life, but is still so far in possession of his reason that he can ask himself whether it would not be contrary to his duty to himself to take his own life. Now**

he inquires whether the maxim of his action could become a universal law of nature. His maxim is: ‘From self-love I adopt it as a principle to shorten my life when its longer duration is likely to bring more evil than satisfaction.’ It is asked then simply whether this principle founded on self-love can become a universal law of nature. Now we see at once that a system of nature of which it should be a law to destroy life by means of the very feeling whose special nature it is to impel to the improvement of life would contradict itself and, therefore, could not exist as a system of nature; hence that maxim cannot possibly exist as a universal law of nature and, consequently, would be wholly inconsistent with the supreme principle of all duty.” (*Fundamental*

*Principles of the Metaphysics of  
Morals)*

The argument that “a law to destroy life by means of the very feeling whose special nature it is to impel to the improvement of life would contradict itself” is sophistical, though Kant offers it in good faith.. Virtuous and noble persons have thought otherwise. What gives Kant the feeling that saying a ‘law’ would be self-contradictory is his adherence to the theological tenet of the sinfulness of suicide.

**D. R. Khashaba**

**May 12, 2020**

## **EINSTEIN AND FREE WILL**

**Einstein was one of the greatest thinkers of the twentieth century. I say this not in view of his Theory of Relativity: had circumstances led him to a different way of life some other scientist would have arrived at the same theory or an equally satisfactory alternative theory: I see Einstein as one of the greatest thinkers in view of his character and moral wisdom. If I comment critically on some of his views my excuse is that a true statement is best grasped when we consider not only what it reveals but also what it conceals and has to conceal by dint of the inescapable imperfection**

**of all formulations of thought and language.**

**In “The World as I see it” Einstein says:**

**“In human freedom in the philosophical sense I am definitely a disbeliever. Everybody acts not only under external compulsion but also in accordance with inner necessity.”**

**This agrees with Spinoza’s position and is doubtless true as far as it goes, but it conceals two very important considerations.**

**Since the ‘internal necessity’ includes a person’s beliefs, ideals, and values, then this, in the case of an enlightened person, is autonomy, or as Spinoza would say, is action under the guidance of adequate ideas, which is the only freedom possible in instances of choice and deliberation. In the case of a befogged mind infect-**

**ed with confusion and illusory aims and false values, this, for Spinoza, is passion under inadequate ideas, and for Socrates, is ignorance.**

**Much more important than this is the consideration that we have true freedom in spontaneous deeds of goodwill and in creativity: in poetry, art, and philosophy, we are free in the fullest and best sense.**

**I believe that the scientific notion of causal necessity involves a dual error. Science is compelled by its methodology to accept the working fiction of causality as a substitute for the creativity of all true being — but I have dealt amply with this in my writings and it would take me way out of my present purpose to go into it here.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**May 24, 2020**



## **SONG OF CREATIVE ETERNITY**

**D. R. Khashaba**

[In “Rethinking Whitehead” I characterized a passage of Whitehead’s as “Bacchic frenzy”. The following lines are my atonement for that blasphemy.]

## **SONG OF BRAHMA**

**Brahma am I.**

**I am but I am not.**

**I am in that I am not.**

**All Being comes from me ut no being  
is in me.**

**I am the Wholeness of the Whole but  
no whole am I.**

**I am Creativity but am not a creator.**

**In an intelligent being I am subjectiv-  
ity but not a subject.**

## **SONG OF VISHNU**

**Vishnu am I.**

**Brahma is Creativity and Power.**

**I am Brahma's creativity and power.**

**Without me nothing is but all that is  
is not.**

## **SONG OF SHIVA**

**Shiva am I.**

**Mortals call me Destroyer but I de-stroy not.**

**All that is, is hemmed with negation.**

**I am the negativity of the negation.**

**All that is, is infected with corruption.**

**I am the corruptivity of the corruption.**

**The transience of the transient am I.**

**Not a destroyer but the ever destroyed am I.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**May 17, 2020**

## **SCOPE OF PHILOSOPHY**

**I have been trying to ‘read’ Bergson’s *Matter and Memory*. It speaks nothing to me, says nothing to me, means nothing to me. I think all the controversies and speculations about dualism and monism, about materialism and idealism, about body and mind, about brain and thought, are misguided.**

**As a philosopher I know nothing about and am in no way concerned about the world or my body or my brain or even of my mind if there be such a think as the mind. I have images, feelings, sensations. These I**

**know; these are all I know immediately and indubitably. My reality is my subjectivity — when I live within myself, when I am most myself. In all my reflections, when I philosophize, I only seek to read meaning into my subjectivity and the offerings of my subjectivity. Others read in them an external world and live and act in that world. These ‘others’ are all of us in our quotidian lives. Others yet read in them riddles and seek to discover the secrets of the riddles. Those ‘others’ are the scientists. They have given us our material civilization with all its blessings and all its curses/ But the philosopher as philosopher knows nothing and transacts with nothing but subjective reality. The poet and the artist are the philosopher’s compatriots in that subjective homeland.**

**The moment thinkers cross the boundaries of the spiritual home they fall into the mazes of mind, body,**

**brain, ideality, reality, and their endless ramifications.**

**Only Plato could range between the inner and the outer worlds without mixing them or confusing them, even when he told a ‘likely tale’ about the making of the world he kept the two worlds unmixed. Since Descartes and thanks to him, the moderns have chiefly and grossly erred.**

**Such, in my view, is the proper scope of true philosophy: the meaning and value of our life, our being, our dreams, meaning and value we create for ourselves. Other than this we know nothing; other than this we are nothing.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**May 22, 2020**

## **DO I LOVE GOD?**

**Do I love God?**

**I cannot love God.**

**I love a finite being as I find my perfection in willing the perfection and the happiness of the finite being.**

**That is the sum of all virtue, to find one's perfection in willing the good of another. That is the insight underlying Kant's assertion that the only absolutely good thing is a good will.**

**I cannot will the perfection or the happiness of God because God is be-**

**yond perfection and beyond happiness.**

**Yet God is not perfection and is not happiness but is the the fount of perfection and of happiness.**

**We love finite beings and can only love finite beings.**

**Muslims love Mohammed but fear God.**

**Christians love Jesus, the human Jesus; if they say they love God it is only because they identify God with the Son and the Son with Jesus and further because they have been taught to see God as a loving, caring father.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**May 22, 2020**

## **DESTRUCTIVE INTELLECT**

**The Intellect is the chief destroyer,  
the worst sinner against the Whole-  
ness of Reality.**

**Philosophers make it their busi-  
ness to chop wholes to pieces. But this  
is not a good metaphor. The ‘chopped  
pieces’ are not actual fragments but  
penciled sketches drawn from differ-  
ent viewpoints, each a fiction shaped  
by the individual philosopher’s whim.  
Then the philosophers go wrangling,  
fighting against each other, every one  
of them loudly shouting that only his  
fiction is true and all the others false.  
Bergson saw that. His insistence on**

**the reality of integral intuition and the reality of integral duration was his valuable contribution to philosophical thinking.**

**What is whole and only what is whole is real. Wholeness is the ground of reality. The I in us, the observable, determinate I, is not our reality: it only stands for our reality in that it points to our metaphysical subjectivity: strictly this should not be called real but the ground of reality. Heraclitus was right in saying that it is unfathomable. That is why Kant laboured in vain to ‘know’ the ‘transcendental unity of apperception’ for this is not a thing knowable but is the metaphysical ground of intelligence. The metaphysical ground of being cannot itself be a determinate being.**

**Plato’s statement that what is wholly real is wholly knowable is marred by the ambiguity of the word**

**'knowable'. We should rather say:  
What is real is intelligible; what is  
wholly real is fully intelligible — in  
truth, the real, the really real, is itself  
and in itself integrity and intelligibil-  
ity and creativity all in one. This Holy  
Trinity cannot be broken up. Thus  
when Plato in the *Phaedo*, in the  
*Symposium*, and in the *Republic*,  
speaking of the intelligent soul when  
it reaches the goal of its travail and  
unites with Reality, affirms that it  
gives birth to virtue and reality. To  
attain reality is to be real, to attain  
understanding is to be not intelligent  
but intelligence, to attain metaphysi-  
cal wholeness is to be fulfilled in *tokos*  
*en kalōi*.**

**The ultimate ground of Reality  
(Being), our subjectivity which is our  
metaphysical reality, has eluded us  
philosophers because we could not  
acknowledge our ignorance: our in-  
nermost reality is not knowable, is**

**not understandable, but it is our intelligence and the ground of all intelligibility; it is our integrity and the ground of all wholeness; it is our creativity and the ground of our freedom, of our spontaneous deeds of love and spontaneous creations in poetry and art and philosophy.**

**The confession of ignorance is the way to wisdom. We can never possess truth but in taking refuge in our inner reality we live in truth.**

**D. R. Khashaba**

**May 23, 2020**

**P.S.: My terminology is loose, not neat and not streamlined. I would not have it otherwise. This should be suggestive, being hospitable to various interpretations. Rigidity of terms – the ideal of mathematics and symbolic logic – is the devil hiding in the iota that split the Christian Church into**

**enemy camps. Hurrah for Plato's  
dissdain of terminological uniformity!**

**APHORISMS AND TRIVIA**  
**THIRD SERIES**

[First series included in *Spaces in Spaceless Thought*, 2019, second series in *The World Within*, 2020]

## **APHORISMS AND TRIVIA**

### **THIRD SERIES**

**1**

**Human understanding grows by erring and correxting its errors.**

**2**

**There is no truth that is totally true.  
When we rest content with our truth  
we are stunted. When we see the defect of our truth our understanding  
grows.**

**3**

**The nemesis of originality: An original thinker cannot escape being misunderstood since we cannot but in-**

terpret her or his thought in terms of our extant thought and thus to falsify it.

4

**Every particular truth has inherent in it a related contra-truth.**

5

**A fully consistent thinker is a shallow thinker. A profound thinker's thought cannot fail to be rich in pregnant contradictions.**

6

**When I think is it I who thinks or is it Nature thinking in me? It comes to the same thing for I am part of Nature.**

7

**A Whimsical Thought**

**Incommensurability reigns. You can't express the rotation of the Earth around the sun in an exact**

**number of its revolutions around itself. That no two things of a kind are identical, that every particular thing is a law unto itself, is the origin of the mutations that produce new species.**

**8**

**Kant is a thinker of great philosophic and moral insights that he suffocates by imprisoning them in the tightly closed citadel of his transcendental system that it lets in no breath of vital air.**

**9**

**Reality is a realm transcending all existence. That is the spiritual, the divine, the eternal.**

**10**

**“Knowledge is power”, they say. Yes, but it is not power we possess but power that possesses us, not power we are master of but power we are slave to.**

## **11**

**Genius always comes with a touch of madness, because genius is the acme of individual peculiarity which is opposed to normality, the mark of sanity.**

## **12**

**Academic philosophers deal with neatly ordered, precisely defined abstractions. At any rate that is their dream. Genuine philosophers wrestle with undefined and indefinable realities.**

## **13**

**The most original of twentieth-century philosophers are the most disregarded by academics: Bergson and Whitehead and Jaspers and Santayana. They do not toe the line.**

**14**

**If Reality is essentially creative intelligence, all manifestation of reality, all being and all becoming, must be intrinsically coherent, intrinsically intelligible. That is the significance of the Principle of Sufficient Reason.**

**15**

**The idea of causation is only a crude adumbration of the Principle of Sufficient Reason which in turn is a crude adumbration of the Principle of Creative Intelligence.**

**16**

**The basic fault of philosophers is their want of humility. All that I know is *eimi*, I am, the rest is a dream cobweb.**

**17**

**Philosophical system is embalmed philosophy. All blood, all moisture is**

**from it emptied. A philosophy throbbing with life is Plato's. Schopenhauer's. Nietzsche's. Aristotle's, Leibniz', Bradley's systems are embalmed.**

## **18**

**All understanding is interpretation.  
All interpretation is falsification. Only they that confess their ignorance are wise.**

## **19**

**Pardon, Father Plato. Knowledge is not reminiscence. Knowledge is excavation of the deep mines of our inner being.**

## **20**

**The deepest, wisest, clearest words ever spoken about religion are Schleiermacher's. Alas! in reasoning from his insights and about his insights, he dims, adulterates, and obscures them.**

**21**

**Santayana too was basically a cosmologist.**

## WORKS BY D. R. Khashaba

All can be freely downloaded from own page on Archive.org: <https://archive.org/details/@daoudkhashaba>

- Let Us Philosophize* (1998, 2008)  
*Plato: An Interpretation* (2005)  
*Socrates' Prison Journal* (2006)  
*Hypatia's Lover* (2006)  
*The Sphinx and the Phoenix* (2009)  
*Plato's Memoirs* (2010)  
*Quest of Reality* (2013)  
*Metaphysical Reality* (2014)  
*Plato's Universe of Discourse* (2015)  
*Creative Eternity: A Metaphysical Myth* (2016)  
*Last Words: philosophical papers* (2017)  
“Stephen Hawking’s Bad Metaphysics”  
“Eternity and Freedom”  
*Philosophy of Creative Eternity*  
(*Creative Eternity* and “Eternity and Freedom” jointly)  
*In Praise of Philosophical Ignorance* (2018)  
*2998 a philosophical romance* (2018)  
*Goodbye to Philosophy* (2018)  
*Spaces in Spaceless Thought* (2019)  
*The World Within* (2020)

